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CHARLES AUCHESTER
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
JESSIE A. MIDDLETON

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A TALE
WHICH
HOLDETH
CHILDREN
FROM PLAY
& OLD MEN
FROM THE
CHIMNEY
CORNER
SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

CHARLES ·
AUCHESTER
by ELIZABETH
SARA · · · ·
· SHEPPARD



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AND IN NEW YORK
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INTRODUCTION

“No greater book will ever be written upon music,” said the late Lord Beaconsfield, in writing of *Charles Auchester*, “and one day it will be recognised as the imaginative classic of that divine art.” Yet, in spite of this, *Charles Auchester* has fallen into oblivion. The book has been out of print for many years—unknown to most of this generation, an enthusiasm to the few.

Elizabeth Sara Sheppard, its author, was born at Blackheath in 1830. Her father was a clergyman who had taken high honours at St. John’s, Cambridge; he was a clever scholar, but entirely without worldly wisdom. On her mother’s side she traced her descent from Jewish ancestry, a fact in which she took an almost passionate pride, which reveals itself again and again in her books, wherein many sympathetic references to the Jews are to be found.

From her earliest childhood she displayed a great love of poetry and music and a fondness for writing on all kinds of subjects. At the age of ten she wrote a drama called *Boadicea*, which was inspired, we are told, by a visit to a place where the British queen is supposed to have pitched her tent. Verse she wrote easily and quickly; metre and rhythm seemed to have no difficulties for her, and she seldom made corrections in the manuscripts which she scribbled at all odd moments when other children of her age would have been at play.

Music was her chief joy, and as a tiny child she would steal away by herself to extemporise for hours on the organ in a neighbouring church, being careful before she began to play to wreath the candlesticks of the organ with flowers, because their scent inspired her dreams and awoke her fancies.

When this strange child was eleven she was an excellent Latin scholar, wrote French fluently, and read Goethe and Schiller in the original. Her extraordinary delicacy of ear enabled her to learn languages with an avidity which astonished her teachers, and when at the age of fourteen she began to study Hebrew—a language she particularly liked

—she found so little difficulty in acquiring it that she soon went on to Greek.

Mr. Sheppard died, leaving his family unprovided for, and Mrs. Sheppard started a school, in which her daughter taught music and Latin to the scholars. The precious moments spent in writing had now to be snatched from the toils of the day, which were most distasteful to one of her temperament and inclinations.

When rare moments of leisure came she would hide herself in the quietest haunt she could find—for preference a summer-house made by the branches of a large mulberry-tree—and write and dream. It was here that *Charles Auchester* was begun, when its author was sixteen.

A friend who shared her literary secrets, and to whom she showed the manuscript, persuaded her to send it to Disraeli, who was already known to fame. In a moment of daring impulse she did so, and received in reply a kindly letter of strong praise and encouragement, containing the words quoted above. Disraeli also introduced her to his publishers, to whom he forwarded the manuscript, and in 1853 *Charles Auchester* was published anonymously,¹ in three volumes, with a dedication: "To the author of *Contarini Fleming*." The book attracted attention at once, and aroused a great deal of interest in musical circles, owing to the fact that its characters have their prototypes in well-known musicians—many of them then living—and its hero was Mendelssohn, very thinly disguised.

The key to the characters is said to be as follows:—

Chevalier Seraphael,	Mendelssohn.
Maria Cerinthea,	Mdme. Maria Malibran.
Josephine Cerinthea,	Mdme. Pauline Viardot.
Clara,	Jenny Lind.
Lenhart Davy,	John Hullah.
Santonio,	Sainton.
Starwood Burney,	Sterndale Bennett.
Milans-André,	Thalberg.
Joseph Cerinthea,	Garcia.
Anastase,	Berlioz.
Miss Lawrence,	Miss Horsley.
Charles Auchester,	Charles Horsley.
Aronach,	Zelter.

The authorship of *Charles Auchester* was attributed to many people, among them to a member of the Rothschild

¹ Sometimes she wrote under the pseudonym of "E. Berger"—her own name turned into French.

family, and Miss Sophie Horsley. Henry Chorley, the famous musical critic, who was unaware of the age and sex of the author, reviewed it in the *Athenæum*. His criticism was unfavourable and severe, but it occupied more than three closely printed columns—a significant fact in those days. After characterising the book as a “half-crazy work,” the critic admitted its fascination, its “true, fervid feeling,” and “fine writing,” and quoted largely from it. He ended by saying—

“We are introduced into an Arcady of Art where the men are Gods and the women are Graces, where ‘the leaf fadeth never and the fire never burns low.’ Perhaps the musician and the amateur will be neither of them the worse for giving himself up to the spirit of the dream—over-wrought, unreal, and extravagant as it is if tried by rule and compass.”

Charles Auchester was followed in 1854 by *Counterparts*, dedicated to Mrs. Disraeli. *My First Season* followed in 1855; *The Double Coronet* in 1856; *Rumour* in 1858, and *Almost a Heroine* in 1859. None of these fulfilled the promise contained in *Charles Auchester*, and although they were included in lists of standard authors in the sixties, they fall far below their author’s first book in every way. Her health was failing gradually, and in striving to keep alive the smouldering fire of her first triumph she wrote book after book feverishly and quickly. Almost a recluse, hardly even giving interviews to her publishers, whom she changed frequently, she led an uneventful life, and died, unmarried, at Brixton, on March 13, 1862, aged thirty-two years.

Charles Auchester, her *chef-d’œuvre*, is without doubt a marvellous production for a girl in her teens, and it bears the unmistakable stamp of genius. Its literary style is open to criticism; its tone is theatrical and extravagant; it is crude and unreal in parts, but, considered as a romance, it is a book to delight the poet and musician. It possesses originality and charm, and contains some of the finest and most wonderful descriptions of music that have ever been written. Take, for example, the impression of the overture to Seraphael’s *Mer-de-Glace*, as it was conveyed to the violinist, Charles Auchester, who was playing in the orchestra—

“At first awoke the strange, smooth, wind-notes of the opening adagio; the fetterless chains of ice seemed to close around my heart. The movement had no blandness in its

solemnity, and so still and shiftless was the grouping of the harmonies, that a frigidity, actual as well as ideal, passed over my pores and hushed my pulses. After a hundred such tense yet clinging chords, the sustaining calm was illustrated, not broken, by a serpentine phrase of one lone oboë, pianissimo over the piano surface, which it crisped not, but on and above which it breathed like the track of a sunbeam aslant from a parted cloud. The slightest possible retardation at its close brought us to the refrain of the simple adagio, interrupted again by a rush of violoncello notes, rapid and low, like some sudden under-current striving to burst through the frozen sweetness. Then spread wide the subject, as plains upon plains of *water-land*; though the time was gradually increased. Amplifications of the same harmonies introduced a fresh accession of violoncelli and oboi contrasted artfully in syncopation, till at length the strides of the accelerando gave a glittering precipitation to the entrance of the second and longest movement.

"Then Anastase turned upon me, and with the first bar we fell into a tumultuous presto. Far beyond all power to analyse as it was just then, the complete idea embraced me as instantaneously as had the picturesque chillness of the first. I have called it tumultuous—but merely in respect of rhythm; the harmonies were as clear and evolved as the modulation itself was sharp, keen, unanticipated and unapproachable. Through every bar reigned that vividly enunciated ideal, whose expression pertains to the one will alone in any age—the ideal, that binding together in suggestive imagery every form of beauty, symbolises and represents something beyond them all.

"Here over the surge-like but fast-bound motivo—only like those tost ice-waves, dead still in their heaped-up crests—were certain swelling crescendos of a second subject, so unutterably, if vaguely, sweet, that the souls of all deep blue Alp-flowers, the clarity of all high blue skies, had surely passed into them, and were passing from them again. . . .

"It was not until the very submerging climax that the playing of Anastase was recalled to me. Then, amidst long ringing notes of the wild horns, and intermittent sighs of the milder wood, swept from the violins a torrent of coruscant arpeggi, and above them all I heard his tone, keen but solvent, as his bow seemed to divide the very strings with fire, and I felt as if some spark had fallen upon my fingers to kindle

mine. As soon as it was over, I looked up, and laughed in his face with sheer pleasure." . . .

As regards the character of Seraphael, it has been said by some critics that the portrait is far-fetched, and untrue to life. It is certainly very much idealised, and the chief events in the life of the hero of *Charles Auchester* do not tally with those in the life of Mendelssohn. The author has based her portrait of the latter more on his personality than on his career. Mendelssohn was her hero, almost a demigod, and in portraying him her rich imagination ran riot, and she has drawn him as an unearthly being, so perfect and ethereal that he appears seen through the glamour of hero-worship.

In extenuation of this, however, it has been pointed out that everything about Mendelssohn *was* unreal—his precocious genius, his beauty, and his power. When conducting, he did cast a spell over his audiences, and had a magnetic effect upon them. The youth who at seventeen composed the overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was no ordinary being. Mendelssohn in real life was a genius of the most exalted type, a man of supernatural attainments, and though Miss Sheppard's portrait of him is overdrawn, it is so interesting, so full of appreciation of the spiritual side of his character, that it is a worthy tribute to his memory.

A striking incident in the book—Seraphael's burial by night, with the music winding up among the stars—it will be remembered did actually happen when Mendelssohn's body, on the way to the grave, was met in the twilight by capell-meisters, who sang round the coffin till midnight.

"At 10 p.m. the coffin was conveyed to the Leipzig station and transported by rail to Berlin. On the road, during the night, it was met at Cöthen by the choir of the place, under Thile their director, and at Dessau by Frederick Schneider, who wiped away the recollection of early antagonisms by a farewell part-song, composed for the occasion, and sung by his choir at the station." ¹

Again, in writing of her hero's personal appearance, Miss Sheppard adheres strictly to fact, for in the admirable article on Mendelssohn in Grove's *Dictionary of Music*, he is described as follows:—

"In person Mendelssohn was short, not so much as five feet seven inches high, and slight of build; in figure lithe and

¹ Grove's *Dictionary of Music*, vol. iii. page 154.

very light and mercurial. His look was dark and very Jewish; the face unusually mobile, and ever varying in expression, full of brightness and animation, and with a most unmistakable look of genius. After a breakfast with him at B. Hawes's, Thackeray told Richard Doyle (who told the writer), 'His face is the most beautiful face I ever saw, like what I imagine our Saviour's to have been.' "

Miss Sheppard's books, especially *Charles Auchester*, won many admirers in America, much to her satisfaction, and several of her novels were published in New York and Boston. Soon after her death a glowing appreciation of her character and her work was written by Miss Harriet E. Prescott (Mrs. Spofford), the well-known American writer and poetess, in the *Atlantic Monthly*. In it the writer gives some of the facts upon which these notes are based, and says of *Charles Auchester* that its pages are literally "drenched with beauty."

Miss Sheppard left behind her three published songs, dedicated to the Marchioness of Hastings, and two books of children's stories, *The Day of a Baby-Boy*, 1854, and *Round the Fire*, 1856.

JESSIE A. MIDDLETON.

The following is a list of the novels by Elizabeth Sara Sheppard:—

Charles Auchester, 1853; Counterparts, 1854; My First Season, 1855; The Double Coronet, 1856; Rumour, 1858; Almost a Heroine, 1859.

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[Title Page of the 1853 Edition]

CHARLES AUCHESTER

A MEMORIAL

“Were it not for Music, we might in these days say
the Beautiful is dead.”—Rt. Hon. B. DISRAELI.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

HURST & BLACKETT, Publishers

Successors to HENRY COLBURN

13 Great Marlborough Street

1853

[*Dedication, 1853 Edition*]

TO
THE AUTHOR
OF
“CONTARINI FLEMING”
WHOSE PERFECT GENIUS
SUGGESTED
THIS IMPERFECT HISTORY

CHARLES AUCHESTER

PART I—CHORAL

CHAPTER I

I NEVER wrote a long letter in my life. It is the manual part I dislike; arranging the paper, holding the pen in my fingers, and finding my arm exhausted with carrying it to and from the ink-stand. It does not signify, though; for I have made arrangements with my free will to write more than a letter—a life, or rather the life of a life. Let none pause to consider what this means—neither quite Germanly mysterious, nor quite Saxonly simple—like my origin.

There are many literal presentations of ordinary personages in books, which I am informed, and I suppose I am to assure myself, are introduced expressly to intensify and illustrate the chief and peculiar interest, where an interest is; or to allure the attention of the implicit where it is not. But how does it happen, that the delineations of the gods among men, the heroic gifted few, the beings of imaginative might or genius, are so infinitely more literal? Who—worshipping, if not strong enough to serve the Ideal—can endure the graceless ignorance of his subject betrayed by many a biographer, accepted and accomplished in his style? Who, so worshipping, can do anything but shudder at the meagre, crude, mistakable portraits of Shakspeare, of Verulam, of Beethoven? Heaven send my own may not make me shudder first; and that, in my attempt to recall, through a kind of artistic interlight, a few remembered lineaments, I be not self-condemned to blush for the spiritual craft, whose first law only I have learned.

I know how many notions grown persons entertain of their childhood as real, which are factitious, and founded upon elder experience, until they become confounded with it; but I also feel that, in great part, we neglect our earliest impressions as vague, which were the truest and best we ever had. I believe none can recall their childish estimate or essence

without identifying with it their present intimate selves. In my own case the analogy is perfect between my conceptions then and my positive existence now. So every one must feel who is at all acquainted with the liabilities of those who follow art.

The man of power may manage to merge his individuality in his expansive association with the individuality of others; —the man of science quenches self-consciousness in abstraction; and not a few, who follow with hot energy some worldly calling, become, in its exercise, as itself, nor for a solitary moment are left alone with their personality to remember even that as separate and distinctly real.

But all artists, whether acknowledged or amateur, must have proved that, for themselves, the gauge of immortality, in life as in art, consists in their self-acquaintance, their self-reliance, their exact self-appreciation, with reference to their masters, their models, their one supreme ideal.

I was born in a city of England farthest from the sea, within whose liberties my grandfather and father had resided, acquiring at once a steady profit and an honourable commercial fame. Never mind what they were, or in which street or square their stocked warehouses were planted, alluring the eyes and hearts of the pupils of Adam Smith. I remember the buildings well; but my elder brother, the eldest of our family, was established there when I first recall them, and he was always there, residing on the premises. He was, indeed, very many years my senior, and I little knew him, but he was a steady, excellent person, with a tolerable tenor voice, and punctilious filial observances towards our admirable mother. My father was born in England; but, though his ancestors were generally Saxon, an infusion of Norman blood had taken place in his family a generation or two behind him, and I always suspected that we owed to the old breeding of Claire Renée de Fontenelle some of our peculiarities and refinements, though my father always maintained that they flowed directly from our mother. He was travelling for the house, upon the Continent, when he first found her out, imbedded like a gem by a little German river; and she left with him, unrepiningly, her still but romantic home, not again to revisit it.

My mother must have been, in her girlhood, as she was in her maturest years, a domestic presence of purity, kindliness, and home-heartedness; she had been accustomed to every kind of household manœuvre, and her needlework was some-

thing exquisite. From her German mother she inherited the quietness of which grace is born, the prudence with which wisdom dwells, and many an attribute of virtue; but from her father she inherited the right to name herself of Hebrew origin. Herein my chief glory lies; and whatever enlightenment my destiny has boasted, streams from that radiant point. I know that there are many who would as genuinely rejoice in descent from Mahomet, from Attila, or from Robin Hood, as from any of Israel's children; but I claim the golden link in my genealogy as that which connects it with eternity and with all that in my faith is glorious.

My mother had lived in a certain seclusion for some years before I first began to realise; for my father died before my first year's close. We still resided near the house of business—not in it, for that was my brother's now, and Fred had lately brought home a wife. But we were quite settled and at home in the house I first remember, when it breaks, picture-like, on my dawning memory. I had three sisters: Clotilda was the eldest, and only a year younger than Fred. She was an extraordinarily clever person, though totally destitute of art or artistic yearnings. She had been educated unwontedly, and at least understood all that she had learned. Her favourite pursuits were reading, and comparing lexicons and analyses of different languages, and endeavouring to find common roots for all; but she could and did work perfectly, write a fine, close hand, and very vigorously superintend the household in my mother's absence or indisposition. She had rather a queer face, like one of the Puritan visages in antique portraits; but a very cheerful smile, and perfect composure of manner—a great charm in mine eyes, oh, ye nymphs and graces! Millicent, three years younger, was a spirit of gentleness—imperceptibly instructing me, she must be treated with a sort of awe. Her melancholy oval face, and her pale eyelids showed more of the Hebrew than any of us, excepting myself; only I was plain, and she remarkably pleasing. Lydia, my youngest sister, was rather showy than brilliant, and rather bright than keen—but not much of either; and yet she was always kind to me, and I should have grieved to miss her round brown eyes at our breakfast-table, or her loud, ringing laugh upstairs from the kitchen; for she had the pantry key.

Both Millicent and Lydia played and sang, if not very powerfully, yet with superior taste. Millicent's notes, not many in number, were as the notes of a cooing dove. Before

I was five years old I used to sit upon the old grand piano and watch their faces while they sang on Sunday evenings—my mother in a tremulous soprano, with Fred's tenor, and the bass of a friend of his. This did not please me; and here let me say, that musical temperament as surely asserts itself in aversion to discordant or not pure, as in desire for sweet and true sounds. I am certain this is true. I was always happy when Millicent sang alone, or even when she and Lydia mixed their notes, for both had an ear as accurate for tune and for time as can be found in England, or indeed in Germany; but, oh! I have writhed beneath the dronings of Hatchardson's bass, on quartette or chorale an audible blemish; and in a rare composition now and then, the distorting and distracting point on which I was morbidly obliged to fasten my attention. We had no other music, except a little of the same kind, not quite so good, from various members of families in the neighbourhood professing to play or sing. But I will not dwell on those, for they are displaced by images more significant.

I can never recollect a time when I did not sing. I believe I sang before I spoke. Not that I possessed a voice of miraculous power, but that everything resolved itself into a species of inward rhythm, not responsive to by words, but which passed into sound, tone, and measure before I knew it was formed. Every sight, as well as all that touched my ears, produced this effect. I could not watch the smoke ascending, nor the motions of the clouds, nor, subtler yet, the stars peeping through the vaulted twilight, without the framing and outpouring of exuberant emotion in strains so expressive to my own intelligence, that it was entranced by them completely. I was a very ailing child for several years, and only the cares I received preserved me then; but now I feel as if all healthfulness had been engendered by the mere vocal abstraction into which I was plunged a great part of every day. I had been used to hear music discussed, slightly it is true, but always reverently, and I early learned there were those who followed that—the supreme of art—in the very town we inhabited; indeed, my sisters had taken lessons of a lady, a pupil of Clementi, but she had left for London before I knew my notes.

Our piano had been a noble instrument, one of the first and best that displaced the harpsichords of Kirkman. Well worn, it had also been well used, and, when deftly handled, had still some delights extricable. It stood in our drawing-room—a

chamber of the red-brick house that held us—rather the envy of our neighbours, for it had a beautiful ceiling, carved at the centre and in the corners with bunches and knots of lilies. It was a high and rather a large room. It was filled with old furniture, rather handsome, and exquisitely kept, and was a temple of awe to me, because I was not allowed to play there, and only sometimes to enter it—as, for example, on Sundays, or when we had tea-parties, or when morning-callers came, and asked to see me; and whenever I did enter, I was not suffered to touch the rug with my feet, nor to approach the sparkling steel of the fire-irons and fender, nearer than its moss-like edge. Our drawing-room was, in fact, a curious confusion of German stiffness and English comfort; but I did not know this then.

We generally sate in the parlour looking towards the street, and the square tower of an ancient church. The windows were draped with dark-blue moreen, and between them stood my mother's dark-blue velvet chair, always covered with dark-blue cloth, except on Sundays and on New Year's Day, and at the feast of Christmas.

The dark-blue drugget covered a polished floor, whose slippery uncovered margin beneath the wainscot has occasioned me many a tumble, though it always tempted me to slide when I found myself alone in the room. There were plenty of chairs in the parlour, and a few little tables, besides a large one in the centre, over which hung a dark-blue cover, with a border of glowing orange. I was fond of the high mantelshelf, whose ornaments were a German model of a bad Haus, and two delicate wax nuns, to say nothing of the china candlesticks, the black Berlin screens, and the bronze pastille-box.

Of all things I gloried in the oak closets—one filled with books, the other with glass and china—on either side of the fireplace; nor did I despise the blue cloth stools, beautifully embroidered by Clo just after her sampler days, in wool oak wreaths rich with acorns. I used to sit upon these alternately at my mother's feet, for she would not permit one to be used more than the other; and I was a very obedient infant.

My greatest trial was going to church, because the singing was so wretchedly bad that it made my ears ache. Often I complained to my mother, but she always said we could not help it if ignorant persons were employed to praise God; that it ought to make us more ready to stand up and sing, and answer our very best, and that none of us could praise Him really as the angels do. This was not anything of an answer,

but I persisted in questioning her that I might see whether she ever caught a new idea upon the subject; but no! and thus I learned to lean upon my own opinion before I was eight years old, for I never went to church till I was seven. Clo thought that there should be no singing in church—she had a dash of the Puritan in her creed; but Lydia horrified my mother oftentimes by saying she should write to the organist about revising the choir. But here my childish wisdom crept in, and whispered to me that nothing could be done with such a battered, used-up, asthmatic machine as our decrepit organ, and I gave up the subject in despair.

Still Millicent charmed me one night by silencing Fred and Mr. Hatchardson when they were prosing of Sternhold and Hopkins, and Tate and Brady, and singing-galleries and charity-children, by saying:

“You all forget that music is the highest gift that God bestows, and its faculty the greatest blessing. It must be the only form of worship for those who are musically endowed—that is, if they employ it aright.”

Millicent had a meek manner of administering a wholesome truth which another would have pelted at the hearer; but then Millicent spoke seldom, and never unless it was necessary. She read, she practised, she made up mantles and caps *à ravir*, and she visited poor sick people; but still I knew she was not happy, though I could not conceive nor conjecture why. She did not teach me anything, and Lydia would have dreamed first of scaling Parnassus; but Clo’s honourable ambition had always been to educate me; and, as she was really competent, my mother made no objection. I verily owe a great deal to her. She taught me to read English, French, and German, between my eighth and tenth years; but then we all knew German in our cradles, as my mother had for us a nurse from her own land. Clo made me also spell by a clever system of her own, and she got me somehow into subtraction; but I was a great concern to her in one respect—I never got on with my writing. I believe she and my mother entertained some indefinite notion of my becoming, in due time, the junior partner of the firm. This prescience of theirs appalled me not, for I never intended to fulfil it, and I thought, justly enough, that there was plenty of time before me to undo their arrangements. I always went to my lessons in the parlour from nine till twelve, and again in the afternoon for an hour, so that I was not overworked; but even when I was sitting by

Clo—she, glorious creature! deep in Leyden or Gesenius—I used to chant my geography or my Telemachus to my secret springs of song, without knowing how or why, but still chanting as my existence glided.

I had tolerable walks in the town and about through the dusty lanes, with my sisters or my nurse; for I was curious, and, to a child, freshness is inspiration, and old sights seen afresh, seem new.

I liked of all things to go to the chemist's when my mother replenished her little medicine-chest. There was unction in the smell of the packeted, ticketed drugs, in the rosy cinnamon, the golden manna, the pungent vinegar, and the aromatic myrrh. How I delighted in the copper weights, the spirit-lamp, the ivory scales, the vast magazines of lozenges, and the delicate lip-salve cases, to say nothing of the glittering toilette bagatelles, and perfumes and soaps! I mention all this just because the only taste that has ever become necessary to me in its cultivation, besides music, is chemistry; and I could almost say I know not which I adhere to most: but memory comes—

“ And with her flying finger sweeps my lip.”

I forbear.

I loved the factories, to some of which I had access. I used to think those wheels and whirring works so wonderful that they were like the inside of a man's brain. My notion was nothing pathetic of the pale boys and lank girls about, for they seemed merely stirring or moveless parts of the mechanism. I am afraid I shall be thought very unfeeling; I am not aware that I was, nevertheless.

I sometimes went out to tea in the town: I did not like it, but I did it to please my mother. At one or two houses I was accustomed to a great impression of muffins, cake, and marmalade, with coffee and cream; and the children I met there did nothing adequately but eat. At a few houses, again, I fared better, for they only gave us little loaves of bread and little cups of tea, and we romped the evening long, and dramatised our elders and betters until the servants came for us. But I, at least, was always ready to go home, and glad to see my short, wide bed beside my mother's vast one, and my spotless dimity curtains with the lucid muslin frills; and how often I sang the best tunes in my head to the nameless effect of rosemary and lavender that haunted my large, white pillow.

WE always went to bed, and breakfasted, very early, and I usually had an hour before nine wherein to disport myself as I chose. It was in these hours Millicent taught me to sing from notes, and to discern the aspect of the key-board. Of the crowding associations, the teeming remembrances, just at infancy and early childhood, I reject all, except such as it becomes positively necessary I should recall; therefore I dwell not upon this phase of my life, delightful as it was, and stamped with perfect purity—the reflex of an unperturbed temperament and of kindly tenderness.

CHAPTER II

WE had a town hall, a very imposing building of its class, and it was not five minutes' walk from the square-towered church I mentioned. It was, I well knew, a focus of some excitement at election times and during the assizes, also in the spring, when religious meetings were held there; yet I had never been in it, and seldom near it—my mother preferring us to keep as clear of the town proper as possible. Yet I knew well where it stood, and I had an inkling now and then that music was to be heard there: furthermore, within my remembrance, Millicent and Lydia had been taken by Fred to hear Paganini within its precincts. I was too young to know anything of the triennial festival that distinguished our city as one of the most musical in England, at that time almost the only one, indeed, so honoured and glorified. I said, what I must again repeat, that I knew nothing of such a prospective or past event until the end of the summer in which I entered my eleventh year.

I was too slight for my health to be complete, but very strong for one so slight. Neither was I tall, but I had an innate love of grace and freedom, which governed my motions; for I was extremely active, could leap, spring, and run with the best, though I always hated walking. I believe I should have died under any other care than that expanded over me, for my mother abhorred the forcing system. Had I belonged to those who advocate excessive early culture, my brain would, I believe, have burst; so continually was it teeming. But from my lengthy idleness alternating with moderate action, I had no strain upon my faculties.

How perfectly I recollect the morning, early in autumn, on which the festival was first especially suggested to me. It was a very bright day, but so chilly that we had a fire in the parlour grate, for we were all disposed to be very comfortable as part of our duty. I had said all my lessons, and was now sitting at the table writing a small text copy in a ruled book, with an outside marbled fantastically brown and blue, which book lay, not upon the cloth, of course, but upon an inclined plane, formed of a great leather case containing about a quire of open blotting-paper.

My sister Clotilda was over against me at the table, with the light shaded from her eyes by a green fan screen, studying as usual, in the morning hours, a Greek Testament full of very neat little black notes. I remember her lead-coloured gown, her rich washing silk, and her clear white apron, her crimson muffetees and short, close black mittens, her glossy hair, rolled round her handsome tortoiseshell comb, and the bunch of rare though quaint ornaments—seals, keys, rings, and locket— that balanced her beautiful English watch. What a treasure they would have been for a modern chatelaine! my father having presented her with the newest, and an antique aunt having willed her the rest. She was very much like an old picture of a young person sitting there.

For my part, I was usually industrious enough, because I was never persecuted with long tasks; my attention was never stretched as it were upon a last, so that it was no meritorious achievement if I could bend it towards all that I undertook, with a species of elasticity peculiar to the nervous temperament. My mother was also busy. She sat in her tall chair at the window, her eyes constantly drawn towards the street, but she never left off working, being deep in the knitting of an enormous black silk purse for Lydia to carry when she went to market. Millicent was somewhere out of the room, and Lydia, having given orders for dinner, had gone out to walk.

I had written about six lines in great trepidation—for writing usually fevered me a little, it was such an effort—when my great goose quill slipped through my fingers, thin as they were, and I made a desperate plunge into an O. I exclaimed aloud, “Oh! what a blot!”—and my lady Mentor arose and came behind me.

“Worse than a blot, Charles,” she said, or something to that effect; “a blot might not have been your fault, but the page

is very badly written; I shall cut it out, and you had better begin another."

"I shall only blot that, Clo," I answered, and Clo appealed to my mother.

"It is very strange, is it not, that Charles, who is very attentive generally, should be so little careful of his writing? He will never suit the post of all others the most important he *should* suit."

"What is that?" I inquired so sharply that my mother grew dignified and responded gravely—

"My dear Clotilda, it will displease me very much if Charles does not take pains in every point, as you are so kind as to instruct him. It is but little such a young brother can do to show his gratitude."

"Mother!" I cried, and sliding out of my chair, I ran to hers. "I shall never be able to write—I mean neatly; Clo may look over me if she likes, and she will know how hard I try."

"But do you never mean to write, Charles?"

"I shall get to write somehow, I suppose, but I shall never write what you call a beautiful hand."

My mother took my fingers and laid them along her own, which were scarcely larger.

"But your hands are very little less than mine; surely they can hold a pen?"

"Oh, yes, I can hold anything," and then I laughed and said, "I could do something with my hands, too." I was going to finish, "I could play;" but Lydia had just turned the corner of the street, and my mother's eyes were watching her up to the door. So I stood before her without finishing my explanation. She at length said, kindly, "Well, now go and write one charming copy, and then we will walk."

I ran back to my table and climbed my chair, Clo having faithfully fulfilled her word, and cut out the offending leaf.

But I had scarcely traced once "Do not contradict your elders," before Lydia came in flushed and glowing, with a basket upon her arm. She exhibited the contents to my mother, who, I suppose, approved thereof, as she said they might be disposed of in the kitchen, and then, with a sort of sigh began, before she left the room, to remove her walking dress—

"Oh! it is hopeless; the lowest price is a guinea."

"I was fearful it would be so, my dear girl," replied my mother, in a tone of mingled condolence and authority she was

fond of assuming; "it would be neither expedient nor fitting that I should allow you to go, though I very much wish it; but should we suffer ourselves such an indulgence, we should have to deprive ourselves of comforts that are necessary to health, and thus to well-being. I should not like dear Millicent and yourself, young as you are, to go alone to the crowded seats in the town hall; and if I went with you, we should be three guineas out of pocket for a month."

This was true; my mother's jointure was small, and though we lived in ease, it was by the exercise of an economy rigidly enforced and minutely developed. It was in my own place, indeed, I learned how truly happy does comfort render home, and how strictly comfort may be expressed by love from prudence, by charity from frugality, and by wit from very slender competence.

"I do not complain, dear mother," Lydia resumed, in a livelier vein; "I ventured to ask at the office, because you gave me leave, and Fred thought there would be back seats lowered in price, or perhaps a standing gallery, as there was at the last festival. But it seems the people in the gallery made so much uproar last time, that the committee have resolved to give it up."

This was getting away from the point, so I put in, "Is the festival to be soon then, Lydia?"

"Yes, dear; it is only three weeks to-day to the first performance."

"Will it be very grand?"

"Oh, yes! the finest and most complete we have ever had."

Then Lydia, having quite recovered her cheerfulness, went to the door, and speedily was no more seen. No one spoke, and I went on with my copy; but it was hard for me to do so, for I was in a pricking pulsation from head to foot. It must have been a physical prescience of mental excitement, for I had scarcely ever felt so much before. I was longing, nay, crazy, to finish my page, that I might run out and find Millicent, who, child as I was, I knew could tell me what I wanted to hear better than any one of them. My eagerness impeded me, and I did not conclude it to Clo's genuine satisfaction, after all. She dotted all my i's, and crossed my t's, though with a condescending confession that I had taken pains—and then I was suffered to go; but it was walking-time, and my mother dressed me herself in her room, so I could not catch Millicent till we were fairly in the street.

CHAPTER III

I do not pretend to remember all the conversations verbatim which I have heard during my life, or in which I have taken a part; still there are many which I do remember word by word, and every word. My conversation that morning with Millicent I do not remember; its results blotted it out for ever, still I am conscious it was an exposition of energy and enthusiasm, for hers kindled as she replied to my ardent inquiries, and, unknowingly, she inflamed my own. She gave me a tale of the orchestra, its fulness and its potency; of the five hundred voices, of the conductor, and of the assembly; she assured me that nothing could be at all like it, that we had no idea of its resources or its effects.

She was melancholy, evidently, at first, but quite lost in her picturesque and passionate delineation; I all the while wondering how she could endure to exist and not be going. I felt in myself that it was not only a sorrow, but a shame to live in the very place and not press into the courts of music. I adored music even then, ay! not less than now, when I write with the strong heart and brain of manhood. I thought how easily Millicent might do without a new hat, a new cloak, or live on bread and water for a year. But I was man enough even then, I am thankful to say, to recall almost on the instant that Millicent was a woman, a very delicate girl, too, and that it would never do for her to be crushed among hundreds of moving men and women, nor for Fred to undertake the charge of more than one—he had bought a ticket for his wife. Then I returned to myself.

From the first instant the slightest idea of the festival had been presented to me, I had seized upon it personally with the most perfect confidence. I had even determined how to go, for go I felt I must; and I knew if I could manage to procure a ticket, Fred would take me in his hand, and my mother would allow me to be disposed of in the shadow of his coat-tails; he was always so careful of us all. As I walked homewards I fell silent, and with myself discussed my arrangements; they were charming. The town hall was not distant from our house more than a quarter of a mile. I was often permitted to run little errands for my sisters, to match a silk, or to post a letter. My pecuniary plan was unique: I was allowed

twopence a week to spend as I would, though Clo protested I should keep an account-book as soon as I had lived a dozen years. From my hatred of copper money I used to change it into silver as fast as possible, and at present I had five sixpences, and should have another by the end of another week. I was to take this treasure to the ticket office, and request whatever gentleman presided to let me have a ticket for my present deposit—and trust—I felt a certain assurance that no one would refuse me, I know not why, who had to do with the management of musical affairs. I was to leave my sixpences with my name and address, and to call with future allowances until I had refunded all. It struck me that not many months must pass before this desirable end might accomplish itself.

I have often marvelled why I was not alarmed, nervous as I was, to venture alone into such a place, with such a purpose; but I imagine I was just too ignorant, too infantine in my notions of business. At all events, I was more eager than anxious for the morrow, and only restless from excited hope. I never manœuvred before, I have often manœuvred since, but never quite so innocently, as I did to be sent on an errand the next morning. It was very difficult, no one *would* want anything, and at last in despair I dexterously carried away a skein, or half a skein, of brown sewing silk, with which Lydia was hemming two elegant gauze veils for herself and for Millicent. The veils were to be worn that day I knew, for my mother had set her heart upon their excluding a “thought” of east in the autumnal wind, and there was no other silk; I managed to twist it into my shoe, and Lydia looked everywhere for it, even into the pages of Clo’s book—greatly to her discomfiture. But in vain, and at last said Lydia, “Here, Charles, you must buy me another,” handing me a penny. Poor Lydia! she did not know how long it would be before I brought the silk; but imagining I should be back *not* directly, I had the decency to transfer my pilfered skein to the under surface of the rug; for I knew that they would turn it up as usual in a search. And then, without having been observed to stoop, I fetched my beaver broad brimmer and scampered out.

I scampered the whole way to the Hall. It was a chilly day, but the sun had acquired some power, and it was all summer in my veins. I believe I had never been in such a state of ecstasy. I was quite light-headed, and madly expected to

possess myself of a ticket immediately, and dance home in triumph. The hall! how well I remember it, looking very still, very cold, very blank; the windows all shuttered, the doors all closed. But never mind; the walls were glorious! They glittered with yellow placards, the black letters about a yard long announcing the day, the hour, the force—the six foot long list of wonders and worthies. I was something disappointed not to find the ticket-office a Spanish castle, suddenly sprung from the stone-work of the hall itself, but it was some comfort that it was in St. Giles' Street, which was not far.

I scampered off again—I tumbled down, having lost my breath—but I sprang again to my feet; I saw a perfect encampment of placards, and I rushed towards it. How like it was to a modern railway terminus, that ticket-office!—in more senses than one, too. The door was not closed here, but wide open to the street: within were green baize doors besides, but the outer entrance was crowded, and those were shut—not for a minute together though, for I could not complain of quiet here. Constantly some one hurrying past nearly upset me, bustling out or pushing in. They were all men, it is true; but was I a girl? Besides, I had seen a boy or two who had surveyed me impertinently, and whom I took leave to stare down. A little while I stood in the entry, bewildered, to collect my thoughts—not my courage—and then, endeavouring to be all calmness and self-possession, I staggered in. I then saw two enclosed niches, counter-like, the one had a huge opening, and was crammed with people on this side; the other was smaller, an air of eclecticism pervaded it; and behind each stood a man. There was a staircase in front, and painted on the wall to its left I read—"Committee-room upstairs; Ballotted places"—but then I returned to my counters and discovered, by reading also, that I must present myself at the larger for unreserved central seats. It was occupied so densely in front just now that it was hopeless to dream of an approach or appeal; I could never scale that human wall. I retreated again to the neighbourhood of the smaller compartment, and was fascinated to watch the swarming faces. Now a stream poured down the staircase, all gentlemen, and most of them passed out, nodding and laughing among themselves. Not all passed out. One or two strolled to the inner doors and peeped through their glass halves, while others gossiped in the entry. But one man came, and as I watched him, planted himself against the

counter I leaned upon—the mart of the reserved tickets. He did not buy any though, and I wondered why he did not, he looked so easy, so at home there. Not that I saw his face, which was turned from me; it struck me he was examining a clock there was up on the staircase wall. I only noticed his boots, how bright they were, and his speckled trowsers, and that his hand, which hung down, was very nicely covered with a doeskin glove.

Before he had made out the time, a number of the stones in the human partition gave way at once—in other words, I saw several chinks between the loungers at the larger counter. I closer clasped my sixpences, neatly folded in paper, and sped across the office. Now was my hour. I was not quite so tall as to be able to look over and see whom I addressed; nevertheless, I still spoke up.

I said, “If you please, Sir, I wish to speak to you very particularly about a ticket.”

“Certainly,” was the reply instantly thrown down upon me. “One guinea if you please.”

“Sir, I wish to *speak* about one, not to buy it just this minute; and if you allow me to speak”—I could not continue with the chance of being heard, for two more stones had just thrust themselves in and hid my chink; they nearly stifled me as it was, but I managed to escape, and stood out clear behind. I stood out not to go, but to wait; determined to apply again far more vigorously.

I listened to the rattling sovereigns as they dropped, and dearly I longed for some of that money, though I never longed for money before or since. Then suddenly reminded, I turned to see whether that noticeable personage had left the smaller counter. He was there. I insensibly moved nearer to him—so attractive was his presence. And as I believe in various occult agencies and physical influences, I hold myself to have been actually drawn towards him. He had a face upon which it was life to look, so vivid was the intelligence it radiated, so interesting was it in expression; and, if not perfect, so pure in outline. He was gazing at me too, and this, no doubt, called out of me a glance all imploring, as so I felt, yea, even towards him, for a spark of kindest beam seemed to dart from under his strong dark lashes, and his eyes woke up; he even smiled just at the corners of his small, but not thin lips. It was too much for me. I ran across and again took my stand beside him. I thought, and I still think, he would have spoken to me

instantly, but another man stepped up and spoke to him. He replied in a voice I have always especially affected—calm, and very clear, but below tone in uttering remarks not intended for the public. I did not hear a word. As soon as he finished speaking, he turned and looked down upon me. And then he said, "Can I do anything for you?"

I was so charmed with his frank address, I quite gasped for joy; "Sir, I am waiting to speak to the man inside over there about my ticket."

"Shall I go across and get it?"

"Why no, sir, I must speak to him—or if you would tell me about it."

"I will tell you anything—say on."

"Sir, I am very poor, and have not a guinea, but I shall have enough in time, if you will let me buy one with the money I have brought, and pay the rest by degrees."

I shall never forget the way he laid his hand on my shoulder, and turned me to the light—to scrutinise my developments, I suspect; for he stayed a moment or two before he answered, "I do think you look as if you really wanted one, but I am afraid they will not understand such an arrangement here."

"I *must* go to the festival," I returned, looking into his eyes, "I am so resolved to go; I will knock the door down if I cannot get a ticket. Oh! I will sell my clothes, I will do anything. If you will get me a ticket, sir, I will promise to pay you, and you can come and ask my mother whether I ever break my word."

"I am sure you always keep it, or you would not love music so earnestly; for you are very young to be so earnest," he responded, still holding me by the arm that thrilled beneath his kindly pressure; "will you go a little walk with me, and then I can better understand you, or what you want to do?"

"I won't go till I have got my ticket."

"You *cannot* get a ticket, my poor boy; they are not so easily disposed of. Why not ask your mother?"

"My sister as good as did; but my mother said it was too expensive."

"Did your mamma know how very much you wished it?"

"We do not say mamma, she does not like it, she likes 'liebe Mutter.'"

"Ah, she is German! Perhaps she would allow you to go if you told her your great desire."

"No, Sir; she told Lydia that it would put her out of pocket."

My new friend smiled at this.

"Now just come outside, we are in the way of many people here, and I have done my business since I saw that gentleman I was talking to, when you crept so near me."

"Did you know I wanted to come close to you, Sir?"

"Oh, yes! and that you wanted to speak. I know the little violin face."

These words transported me. "Oh! do you think I am like a violin? I wish I were one going to the festival."

"Alas! in that sense you are not one, I fear."

I burst into tears, but I was very angry with myself, and noiselessly put my whole face into my handkerchief as we moved to the door. Once out in the street the wind speedily dried these dews of my youth, and I ventured to take my companion's hand. He glanced down at mine as it passed into his, and I could see that he was examining it. I had very pretty hands and nails, they were my only handsome point; my mother was very vain of them. I have found this out since I have grown up.

"My dear little boy, I am going to do a very daring thing."

"What is that, Sir?"

"I am going to run away with you; I am going to take you to my little house, for I have thought of something I can only say to you in a room. But, if you will tell me your name, I will carry you safe home afterwards, and explain everything to the 'liebe Mutter.'"

"Sir, I am so thankful to you, that I cannot do enough to make you believe it. I am Charles Auchester, and we live at No. 14 Herne Street, at a red house, with little windows, and a great many steps up to the door."

"I know the house, and have seen a beautiful Jewess at the window."

"Everybody says Millicent is like a Jewess. Sir, do you mind telling me your name? I don't want to know it unless you like to tell it me."

"My name is not a very pretty one—Lenhart Davy."

"From David, I suppose?" I said quickly. My friend looked at me very keenly.

"You seem to think so at least."

"Yes, I thought you came from a Jew, like us; partly, I mean. Millicent says we ought to be very proud of it, and I think so too, because it is so very ancient and does not alter."

I perfectly well remember making this speech. Lenhart

Davy laughed quietly, but so heartily it was delightful to hear him.

"You are quite right about that. Come, will you trust me?"

"Oh, Sir, I should like to go above all things, if it is not very far. I mean I must get back soon, or they will be frightened about me."

"You *shall* get back soon. I am afraid they are frightened now, do you think so? But my little house is on the way to yours, though you would never find it out."

He paused, and we walked briskly forwards.

CHAPTER IV

TURNING out of the market-place, a narrow street presented itself; here were factories and the backs of houses. Again we threaded a narrow turning; here was an outskirt of the town. It fronted a vast green space; all building-ground enclosed this quiet corner, for only a few small houses stood about. Here were no shops, and no traffic. We went on in all haste, and soon my guide arrested himself at a little green gate. He unlatched it; we passed through into a tiny garden, trim as tiny, pretty as trim, and enchantingly after my own way of thinking. Never shall I forget its aspect; the round bed in the centre, edged with box as green as moss; the big rose-tree in the middle of the bed, and lesser rose-trees round; the narrow gravel walk, quite golden in the sun; the outer edge of box, and outer bed of heaths, and carnations, and glowing purple stocks. But above all, the giant hollyhocks, one on each side of a little brown door, whose little latticed porch was arched with clematis, silvery as if moonlight "*Minatrost*" were ever brooding upon that threshold.

I must not loiter here; it would have been difficult to loiter in going about the garden, it was so unusually small; and the house, if possible, was more diminutive. It had above the door two tiny casement windows, only two; and as my guide opened the little door with a key he brought out of his pocket, there was nothing to delay our entrance. The passage was very narrow, but lightsome, for a door was open at the end, peeping into a lawny kind of yard. No children were tumbling about, nor was there any kitchen smell, but the rarest of all

essences, a just perceptible cleanliness — not moisture, but freshness.

We advanced to a staircase about three feet in width, uncarpeted, but of a rich brown colour, like chestnut skins; so also were the balusters. About a dozen steps brought us to a proportionate landing-place, and here I beheld two other little brown doors at angles with one another. Lenhart Davy opened one of these, and led me into a tiny room. Oh! what a tiny room! It was so tiny, so rare, so curiously perfect, that I could not help looking into it as I should have done into a cabinet collection. The casements were uncurtained, but a green silk shade, gathered at the top and bottom, was drawn half-way along each. The walls were entirely books — in fact, the first thing I thought of was the book-houses I used to build of all the odd volumes in our parlour closet, during my quite incipient years. But such books as adorned the sides of the little sanctum were more suitable for walls than mine, in respect of size, being, as they were, or as far as I could see, all music books, except in a stand between the casements, where a few others rested one against another. There was a soft grey drugget upon the floor; and though, of course, the book walls took up as much as half the room (a complete inner coat they made for the outside shell), yet it did not strike me as poking, because there was no heavy furniture — only a table, rather oval than round, and four chairs; both chairs and table of the hue I had admired upon the staircase — a rich vegetable brown. On the table stood a square inkstand of the same wood, and a little tray filled with such odds as rubber, a penknife, sealing-wax, and a pencil. The wood of the mantelshelf was the same tone, and so was that of a plain piano that stood to the left of the fireplace, in the only nook that was not books from floor to ceiling; but the books began again over the piano. All this wood, so darkly striking the eye, had an indescribably soothing effect (upon me I mean), and right glad was I to see Mr. Davy seat himself upon a little brown bench before the piano, and open it carefully.

“Will you take off your hat for a minute or two, my dear boy?” he asked, before he did anything else.

I laid the beaver upon the oval table.

“Now, tell me, can you sing at all?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“From notes, or by ear?”

"A great deal by ear, but pretty well by notes."

"*From* notes," he said, correctly, and I laughed.

He then handed me a little book of chorales, which he fetched from some out-of-the-way hole beneath the instrument. They were all German: I knew some of them well enough.

"Oh, yes, I can sing these, I think."

"Try 'Ein fester Burg ist unser Gott.' Can you sing alto?"

"I always do. Millicent says it is proper for boys."

He just played the opening chord slentando, and I began. I was perfectly comfortable, because I knew what I was about, and my voice, as a child's, was perfect. I saw, by his face, that he was very much surprised, as well as pleased. Then he left me alone to sing another, and then a third, but at last he struck in with a bass, the purest, mellowest, and most unshaken I have ever heard, though not strong; neither did he derange me by a florid accompaniment he made as we went along. When I concluded the fourth, he turned, and took my hand in his.

"I knew you could do something for music, but I had no idea it would be so very sweetly. I believe you will go to the festival, after all. You perceive I am very poor, or perhaps you do not perceive it, for children see fairies in flies. But look round my little room. I have nothing valuable except my books and my piano, and those I bought with all the money I had several years ago. I dare say you think my house is pretty. Well, it was just as bare as a barn when I came here six months ago. I made the shelves (the houses for my precious books) of deal, and I made that table, and the chairs, and this bench, of deal, and stained each afterwards; I stained my shelves too, and my piano. I only tell you this that you may understand how poor I am. I cannot afford to give you one of these tickets, they are too dear; neither have I one myself; but if your mother approves, and you like it, I believe I can take you with me to sing in the chorus."

This was too much for me to bear without some strong expression or other. I took my hat, hid my face in it, and then threw my arms round Lenhart Davy's neck. He kissed me as a young father might have done, with a sort of pride, and I was able to perceive he had taken an instant fancy to me. I did not ask him whether he led the chorus, nor what he had to do with it, nor what I should have to do; but I begged him joyously to take me home directly. He tied on

my hat himself, and I scampered all the way downstairs and round the garden before he came out of his shell. He soon followed after me, smiling; and though he asked me no curious question as we went along, I could tell he was nervous about something. We walked very fast, and in little less than an hour from the time I left home, I stood again upon the threshold.

CHAPTER V

OF all the events of that market-day, none moved me more enjoyably than the sight of the countenances, quite petrified with amazement, of my friends in the parlour. They were my three sisters. Clo came forward in her bonnet, all but ready for a sortie, and though she bowed demurely enough, she began at me very gravely:

"Charles, I was just about to set out and search for you. My mother has already sent a servant. She herself is quite alarmed, and has gone upstairs."

Before I could manage a reply, or introduce Lenhart Davy, he had drawn out his card. He gave it to the "beautiful Jewess." Millicent took it calmly, though she blushed, as she always did when face to face with strangers; and she motioned him to the sofa. At this very instant my mother opened the door.

It would not be possible for me to recover that conversation, but I remember how very refined was the manner, and how amiably deferential the explanation of my guide, as he brought out everything smooth and apparent even to my mother's ken. Lydia almost laughed in his presence, she was so pleased with him, and Millicent examined him steadfastly with her usually shrinking grey eyes. My mother I knew was displeased with me, but she even forgave me before he had done speaking. His voice had in it a quality (if I may so name it) of brightness—a metallic purity when raised; and the heroic particles in his blood seemed to start up and animate every gesture as he spoke. To be more explicit as to my possibilities, he told us that he was in fact a musical professor, though with little patronage in our town, where he had only a few months settled; that for the most part he taught, and preferred to teach in classes, though he had but just succeeded in organising

the first. That his residence and connection in our town were authorised by his desire to discover the maximum moral influence of music upon so many selected from the operative ranks, as should enable him by inference to judge of its moral power over those same ranks in the aggregate. I learned this afterwards, of course, as I could not apprehend it then; but I well recall that his language, even at that time, bound me as by a spell of conviction, and I even appreciated his philanthropy in exact proportion to his personal gifts.

He said a great deal more, and considerably enlarged upon several points of stirring musical interest, before he returned to the article of the festival. Then he told us that his class would not form any section of the chorus, being a private affair of his own, but that he himself should sing among the basses, and that it being chiefly amateur, any accumulation of the choral force was of consequence. He glanced expressly at my mother when he said—

“I think your little boy’s voice and training would render him a very valuable vote for the altos, and if you will permit me to take charge of him at the rehearsals, and to exercise him once or twice alone, I am certain Mr. St. Michel will receive him gladly.”

“Is Mr. St. Michel the conductor, Mr. Davy, then?” replied my mother with kindness. “I remember seeing him in Germany when a little theatre was opened in our village. I was a girl then, and he very young.”

“Yes, Madam; application was made to the wonderful Milans-André, who has been delighting Europe with his own compositions interpreted by himself; but he could not visit England at present, so St. Michel will be with us as on former occasions; and he is a good conductor, very steady, and understands rehearsal.”

Let me here anticipate and obviate a question. Was not my mother afraid to trust me in such a mixed multitude, with men and women her inferiors in culture and position? My mother had never trusted me before with a stranger, but I am certain, at this distance of time, she could not resist the pure truthfulness and perfect breeding of Lenhart Davy, and was forced into desiring such an acquaintance for me. Perhaps, too, she was a little foolish over her last-born, for she certainly did indulge me in a quiet way, and with a great show of strictness.

As Lenhart Davy paused, she first thanked him, then rang

the bell, was silent until she had ordered refreshments; sat still even then a few minutes, and presently uttered a deliberate consent. I could not bear it. I stood on one foot for an instant behind Clo's chair, and then flung myself into the passage. Once upstairs, I capered and danced about my mother's bedroom until fairly exhausted, and then I lay down on my own bed, positively in my coat and boots, and kicked the clothes into a heap, until I cried. This brought me to, and I remembered with awe the premises I had invaded. I darted to my feet, and was occupied in restoring calm as far as possible to the tumbled coverlid, when I was horrified at hearing a step. It was only Millicent, with tears in her good eyes.

"I am so glad for you, Charles," she said; "I hope you will do everything in your power to show how grateful you are."

"I will be grateful to everybody," I answered; "but do tell me, is he gone?"

"Dear Charles, do not say '*he*' of such a man as Mr. Davy."

Now, Millicent was but seventeen, still she had her ideas, girlishly chaste and charming, of what men ought to be.

"I think he is lovely," I replied, dancing round and round her, till she seized my hands.

"Yes, Mr. Davy is gone, but he is kindly coming to fetch you to-morrow, to drink tea with him; and mother has asked him to dine here on Sunday. He showed her a letter he has from the great John Andernach, because mother said she knew him, and she says Mr. Davy must be very good, as well as very clever, from what Mr. Andernach has written."

"I know he is good! think of his noticing *me*! I knew I should go! I said I would go!" and I pulled my hands away to leap again.

The old windows rattled, the walls shook, and in came Clo.

"Charles, my mother says if you do not keep yourself still she will send a note after Mr. Davy. My dear boy, you must come and be put to rights. How rough your head is! what have you been doing to make it so?" and she marched me off. I was quelled directly, and it was indeed very kind of them to scold me, or I should have ecstasised myself ill.

It was hard work to get through that day, I was so impatient for the next; but Millicent took me to sing a little in the evening, and I believe it sent me to sleep. I must mention that the festival was to last three days. There were to be

three grand morning performances, and three evening concerts; but my mother informed me she had said she did not like my being out at night, and that Lenhart Davy had answered, the evening concerts were not free of entrance to him, as there was to be no chorus, so he could not take me. I did not care. For now a new excitement, child of the first and very like its parent, sprang within my breast. To sing myself—it was something too grand—the veins glowed in my temples as I thought of my voice, so small and thin, swelling in the cloud of song to heaven—my side throbbed and fluttered. To go was more than I dared to expect—but to be necessary to go was more than I deserved—it was glory.

I gathered a few very nice flowers to give Lenhart Davy, for we had a pretty garden behind the house, and also a bit of a green-house in which Millicent kept our geraniums all the winter. She was tying up the flowers for me with green silk when he knocked at the door, and would not come in, but waited for me outside. Amiable readers, everybody was old-fashioned twenty years ago, and many somebodies took tea at five o'clock. Admirable economy of social life—to eat when you hunger, and to drink when you thirst! But it is polite to invent an appetite for made dishes, so we complain not that we dine at eight nowadays; and it is politic too, for complexions are not what they used to be, and maiden heiresses with all their thousands, cannot purchase Beauty Sleep! Pardon my digression, while Davy is waiting at the door. I did not keep him so long, be certain. We set out. He was very much pleased with my flowers, and as it was rather a chilly afternoon, he challenged me to a race. We ran together, he striding after me like a child himself in play, and snapping at my coat; I screamed all the while with exquisite sensation of pleasurable fun. Then I sped away like a hound, and still again he caught me and lifted me high into the air. Such buoyancy of spirits I never met with—such fluency of attitude—I cannot call them or their effect animal. It was rather as if the bright wit pervaded the bilious temperament, almost misleading the physiologist to name it nervous. I have never described Lenhart Davy, nor can I; but to use the keener words of my friend Dumas, he was one of the men the most “significant” I ever knew.

CHAPTER VI

ARRIVED at his house—that house, just what a house should be, to the purpose in every respect—I flew in as if quite at home. I was rather amazed that I saw no woman-creature about, nor any kind of servant. The door at the end of the passage was still open; I still saw out into the little lawny yard, but nobody was stirring. “The house was haunted.”

I believe it—by a choir of glorious Ghosts.

“Dear alto, you will not be alarmed to be locked in with me, I hope, will you?”

“Frightened, Sir? oh, no, it is delicious.” I most truly felt it delicious. I preceded him up the staircase—he remaining behind to lock the little door. I most truly felt it delicious. Allow me again to allude to the appetite. I was very hungry, and when I entered the parlour I beheld such preparation upon the table as reminded me it is at times satisfactory as well as necessary to eat and drink. The brown inkstand and company were removed, and in their stead, I saw a little tray, of an oval form, upon which tray stood the most exquisite porcelain service for two I have ever seen. The china was small and very old—I knew that, for we were rather curious in china at home; and I saw how very valuable these cups, that cream jug, those plates must be. They were of pearly clearness, and the crimson and purple butterfly on each rested over a sprig of honeysuckle entwined with violets.

“Oh, what beautiful china!” I exclaimed; I could not help it, and Lenhart Davy smiled.

“It was a present to me from my class in Germany.”

“Did you have a class, Sir, in Germany?”

“Only little boys, Charlie, like myself.”

“Sir, did you teach when you were a little boy?”

“I began to teach before I was a great boy, but I taught only little boys then.”

He placed me in a chair while he left the room for an instant. I suppose he entered the next, for I heard him close at hand. Coming back quickly he placed a little spirit-lamp upon the table, and a little bright kettle over it; it boiled very soon. He made such tea!—I shall never forget it; and when I told him I very seldom had tea at home, he answered, “I seldom drink more than one cup myself; but I think one cannot hurt

even such a nervous person as you are, and besides, tea improves the voice—did you know that? ”

I laughed and drew my chair close to his. Nor shall I ever forget the tiny loaves, white and brown, nor the tiny pat of butter, nor the thin, transparent biscuits, crisp as hoar-frost, and delicate as if made of Israelitish manna. Davy ate not much himself, but he seemed delighted to see me eat, nor would he allow me to talk.

“ One never should,” said he, “ while eating.”

Frugal as he was, he never for an instant lost his cheery smile and companionable manner, and I observed he watched me very closely. As soon as I had gathered up and put away my last crumb, I slipped out of my chair, and pretended to pull him from his seat.

“ Ah! you are right, we have much to do.”

He went out again, and returned laden with a wooden tray, on which he piled all the things and carried them downstairs. Returning, he laughed and said—

“ I must be a little put out to-night as I have a visitor, so I shall not clear up until I have taken you home.”

“ My mother is going to send for me, Sir; but I wish I might help you now.”

“ I shall not need help—I want it at least in another way. Will you now come here? ”

We removed to the piano. He took down from the shelves that overshadowed it three or four volumes in succession. At length, selecting one, he laid it upon the desk and opened it. I gazed in admiration. It was a splendid edition, in score, of Pergolesi’s “ Stabat Mater.” He gathered from within its pages a separate sheet—the alto part beautifully copied—and handed it to me, saying, “ I know you will take care of it.” So I did. We worked very hard, but I think I never enjoyed any exercise so much. He premised, with a cunning smile, that he should not let me run on at that rate if I had not to be brushed up all in a hurry; but then, though I was ignorant, I was apt and very ardent. I sang with an entire attention to his hints; and though I felt I was hurrying on too fast for my “ understanding ” to keep pace with my “ spirit,” yet I did get on very rapidly in the mere accession to acquaintance with the part. We literally rushed through the “ Stabat Mater,” which was for the first part of the first grand morning, and then, for the other, we began the “ Dettingen Te Deum.” I thought this very easy after the “ Stabat Mater,” but Davy silenced me by

suggesting, "You do not know the difficulty until you are placed in the choir." Our evening's practice lasted about two hours and a half. He stroked my hair gently, then, and said he feared he had fatigued me. I answered by thanking him with all my might, and begging to go on. He shook his head.

"I am afraid we have done too much now. This day week the 'Creation,' that is for the second morning; and then, Charles, then the 'Messiah,' last and best."

"Oh, the 'Messiah!' I know some of the songs; at least, I have heard them; and are we to hear that? and am I to sing in 'Hallelujah'?" I had known of it from my cradle, and, loving it *before* I heard it, how did I feel for it when it was to be brought so near me! I think that this oratorio is the most beloved of any by children and child-like souls. How strangely in it all spirits take a part!

Margareth, our ancient nurse, came for me at half-past eight. She was not sent away, but Davy would accompany us to our own door. Before I left his house, and while she was waiting in the parlour, he said to me, "Would you like to see where I sleep?" and called me into the most wonderful little room. A shower-bath filled one corner; there was a great closet one whole side, filled with every necessary, exactly enough for one person. The bed was perfectly plain, with no curtains and but a head-board, a mattress, looking as hard as the ground, and a very singular portrait over the head, of a gentleman, in line-engraving, which does not intellectualise the contour. This worthy wore a flowing wig and a shirt bedecked with frills.

"That is John Sebastian Bach," said Lenhart Davy; "at least, they told me so in Dresden. I keep it because it *means* to be him."

"Ah!" I replied; for I had heard the jaw-breaking name, which is dearer to many (though they, alas! too few, are scattered) than the sound of Lydian measures.

CHAPTER VII

IF I permit myself to pay any more visits to the nameless cottage, I shall never take myself to the festival; but I must just say that we entertained Davy the next Sunday at dinner. I had never seen my mother enjoy anybody's society so much; but I observed he talked not so much as he listened to her, and

this may have been the secret. He went very early, but on the Tuesday he fetched me again. It was not in vain that I sang this time either—my voice seemed to deliver itself from something earthly; it was joy and ease to pour it forth.

When we had blended the bass and alto of the "Creation" choruses, with a long spell at "The heavens are telling," Davy observed, "Now for the 'Messiah,' but you will only be able to look at it with me; to-morrow night is rehearsal at the hall, and your mother must let you go." Rehearsal at the hall! what words were those! They rang in my brain that night, and I began to grow very feverish. Millicent was very kind to me, but I was quite timid of adverting to my auspices, and I dared not introduce the subject, as none of them could feel as I did. My mother watched me somewhat anxiously; and no wonder, for I was very much excited. But when the morrow came, my self-importance made a man of me, and I was calmer than I had been for days.

I remember the knock which came about seven in the evening just as it was growing grey. I remember rushing from our parlour to Lenhart Davy on the door-step. I remember our walk, when my hands were so cold and my heart was so hot, so happy. I remember the pale, pearly shade that was falling on street and factory, the shop-lit glare, the mail-coach thundering down High Street. I remember how I felt entering, from the dim evening, the chiaro-oscuro of the corridors, just uncertainly illustrated by a swinging lamp or two; and I remember passing into the hall. Standing upon the orchestra, giddy, almost fearful to fall forwards into the great unlighted chaos, the windows looked like clouds themselves, and every pillar, tier, and cornice stood dilated in the unsubstantial space. Lenhart Davy had to drag me forwards to my nook among the altos, beneath the organ, just against the conductor's desk. The orchestra was a dream to me, filled with dark shapes, flitting and hurrying, crossed by wandering sounds, whispers and laughter. There must have been four or five hundred of us up there, but it seems to me like a lampless church, as full as it could be of people struggling for room.

Davy did not lose his hold upon me, but one and another addressed him, and flying remarks reached him from every quarter. He answered in his hilarious voice, but his manner was decidedly more distant than to me when alone with him. At last some one appeared at the foot of the orchestra steps with a taper; some one or other snatched it from him, and in a

moment a couple of candles beamed brightly from the conductor's desk. It was a strange, candle-light effect then. Such great, awful shadows threw themselves down the hall, and so many faces seemed darker than they had clustered in the glooming twilight. Again some hidden hand had touched the gas, which burst in tongues of splendour, that shook themselves immediately over us; *then* was the orchestra a blaze defined as day, but still dark, and darkening, like a vast abyss, lay the hall before us; and the great chandelier was itself a blot, like a mystery hung in circumambient nothingness.

I was lost in the light around me, and striving to pierce into that mystery beyond, when a whisper thrilled me—"Now, Charles, I must leave you. You are Mr. Auchester at present. Stand firm and sing on. Look alone at the conductor, and think alone of your part. Courage!" What did he say "courage" for? as if my heart could fail me then and there.

I looked steadfastly on. I saw the man of many years' service in the cause of music looking fresh as any youth in the heyday of his primal fancy. A white-haired man, with a patriarchal staff besides, which he struck upon the desk for silence, and then raised, in calm, to dispel the silence.

I can only say that my head swam for a few minutes, and I was obliged to shut my eyes before I could tell whether I was singing or not. I was very thankful when somebody somewhere got out as a fugue came in, and we were stopped, because it gave me a breathing instant. But then again breathless—nerveless, I might say, for I could not distinguish my sensations—we rushed on, or I did, it was all the same; I was not myself yet. At length, indeed, it came—that restoring sense of self which is so precious at some times of our life. I recalled exactly where I was. I heard myself singing, felt myself standing; I was as if treading upon air, yet fixed as rock. I arose and fell upon those surges of sustaining sound, but it was as with an undulating motion, itself rest. My spirit straightway soared. I could imagine my own voice, high above all the others, to ring as a lark's above a forest, tuneful with a thousand tones more low, more hidden; the attendant harmonies sank as it were beneath me. I swelled above them. It was my first idea of paradise.

And it is, perhaps, my last.

Let me not prose where I should, most of all, be poetical. The rehearsal was considered very successful. St. Michel praised us. He was a good old man, and, as Davy had re-

marked, very steady: There was a want of unction about his conducting, but I did not know it, certainly not feel it, that night. The "Messiah" was more hurried through than it should have been because of the late hour, and also because, as we were reminded, "it was the most generally known." Besides there was to be a full rehearsal with the band before the festival, but I was not to be present—Davy considerably deeming the full effect would be lost for me were it in any sense to be anticipated.

I feel I should only fail if I should attempt to delineate my sensations on the first two days of performance, for the single reason that the third morning of that festival annihilated the others so effectually as to render me only master at this moment of its unparalleled incidents. *Those* I bear on my heart and in my life even to this very hour, and shall take them with me, yea, as a part of my essential immortality.

CHAPTER VIII

THE second night I had not slept so well as the first, but on the third morning I was, nathless, extraordinarily fresh. I seemed to have lived ages, but yet all struck me in perfect unison as new. I was only too intensely happy as I left our house with Davy, he having breakfasted with us.

He was very much pleased with my achievements. I was very much pleased with everything; I was saturated with pleasure. That day has lasted me—a light—to this. Had I been stricken blind and deaf afterwards, I ought not to have complained—so far would my happiness, in degree and nature, have outweighed any other I can imagine to have fallen to any other lot. Let those who endure, who rejoice, alike pure in passion, bless God for the power they possess—innate, unalienable, intransferable—of suffering all they feel.

I shall never forget that scene. The hall was already crowded when we passed into our places half an hour before the appointed commencement. Every central speck was a head; the walls were pillared with human beings; the swarm increased, floating into the reserved places, and a stream still poured on beneath the gallery.

As if to fling glory on music, not of its own, it was a most splendid day—the finest, warmest, and serenest we had had

for weeks. Through the multitudinous panes the sky was a positive blaze of blue; the sunshine fell upon the orchestra from the great arched window at the end of the vaulted building, and through that window's purple and orange border radiated gold and amethyst upon the countenances of the entering crowd. The hands of the clock were at the quarter now: we in the chorus wondered that St. Michel had not come; again they moved; those noiseless hands, and the "tongue" of iron told eleven. We all grew anxious. Still, as all the clocks in the town were not alike, we might be the mistaken ones by ours. It now struck eleven though from the last church within our hearing, and there was not yet St. Michel. We were all in the chorus fitted in so nicely, that it would have been difficult for some to get out, or if out, impossible to get in. They were all in the orchestra placed as closely as possible, amidst a perfect grove of music-stands. The reserved seats were full, the organist was seated, the score lay wide open upon the lofty desk; but St. Michel did not come!

I shall never forget how we wearied and wondered, and how I, at least, racked myself, writhed, and agonised. The door beneath the orchestra was shut, but every instant or two a hand turned the lock outside—one agitated face peeped in—then another—but were immediately withdrawn. I scarcely suppose the perfect silence lasted three minutes; it was like an electrical suspension, and as quickly snapped. The surcharging spleen of the audience began to break in a murmuring, humming, and buzzing, from centre to gallery. The confusion of forms and faces became a perfect dream, it dazzled me dizzy, and I felt quite sick. A hundred fans began to ply in the reserved seats, the gentlemen bent over the ladies; the sound gathered strength and portentous significance from the non-explanatory calm of the orchestra force; but all eyes were turned, all chins lengthened towards the orchestra door. At precisely a quarter past eleven the door opened wide, and up came a gentleman in a white waistcoat. He stood somewhere in front, but he could not get his voice out at first. Oh, the hisses then! the shouts! the execrations! But it was a musical assembly, and a few cries of "Shame!" hushed the storm sufficiently to give our curiosity vent.

The speaker was a member of the committee, and very woe-begone he looked. He had to say (and it was of course his painful duty) that the unprecedented delay in the commencement of the performance was occasioned by an inevitable and

most unexpected accident. Mr. St. Michel, in riding from his house a few miles out, had been thrown from his horse at the corner of the market-place, and falling on his right arm, had broken it below the elbow.

The suddenness of the event would account for the delay sufficiently: all means at present were being employed to secure the services of an efficient resident professor, and it was trusted he would arrive shortly. Otherwise should there among the enlightened audience be present any professor able and willing to undertake the responsible office of conductor *pro tempore*, the committee would feel —— A hurricane of noises tore up the rest of the sentence in contempt, and flung it in the face of the gentleman in the white waistcoat. He still stood. It was well known that not a hand could be spared from the orchestra; but of course a fancy instantly clutched me of Lenhart Davy. I looked up wistfully at him, among the basses, and endeavoured to persuade him with my eyes to come down. He smiled upon me, and his eye was kindled; otherwise he seemed determined to remain as he was. Davy was very proud, though one of the most modest men I ever knew.

A fresh volley of hisses broke from the very heart of the hall, still it did not circulate, though the confusion seemed increasing in the centre, and it was at that very instant—before poor Merlington had left his apologetic stand—that a form, gliding light as if on air, appeared hovering on the steps at the side of the orchestra.

It was a man at least, if not a spirit; but I had not seen where that gliding form came from, with its light and stealthy speed.

Swift as a beam of morning he sprang up the steps, and with one hand upon the balustrade bowed to the audience. In a moment silence seemed to mantle upon the hall.

He stood before the score, and as he closed upon the time-stick those pointed fingers, he raised his eyes to the chorus and then let them fall upon the band. Those piercing eyes recalled us. Every hand was on the bow, every mouthpiece lifted. There was still silence, but we “heard” no “voice.” He raised his thin arm: the overture began. The curiosity of the audience had dilated with such intensity that all who had been standing still stood, and not a creature stirred. The calm was perfect upon which the “Grave” broke. It was not interpretation alone; it was inspiration. All knew that “Grave”—but few had heard it as it had been spoken that day. It was

then we heard a voice—"a voice from heaven." There seemed not a string that was not touched by fire.

The tranquil echo of the repeat enabled me to bear it sufficiently to look up and form some notion of him on whom so much depended. He was slight, so slight that he seemed to have grown out of the air. He was young, so young that he could not have numbered twenty summers;—but the heights of eternity were fore-shadowed in the forehead's marble dream.

A strange transparency took the place of bloom upon that face of youth, as if from temperament too tender, or blood too rarefied; but the hair betrayed a wondrous strength, clustering in dark curls of excessive richness. The pointed fingers were pale, but they grasped the time-stick with an energy like naked nerve.

But not until the violins woke up, announcing the subject of the allegro, did I feel fully conscious of that countenance absolved from its repose of perfection by an excitement itself divine.

It would exhaust thought no less than words to describe the aspect of music, thus revealed, thus presented. I was a little child then, my brain was unused to strong sensation, and I can only say I remembered not how he looked after all was over. The intense impression annihilated itself, as a white dazzling fire struck from a smith's anvil dies without ashy sign. I have since learned to discover, to adore, every express lineament of that matchless face; but then I was lost in gazing, in a spiritual ebbless excitement—then I was conscious of the composition that he had made one with himself, that became one with him.

The fire with which he led, the energy, the speed, could only have been communicated to an English orchestra by such accurate force. The perfection with which the conductor was endued must surely have passed electrically into every player; there fell not a note to the ground; such precision was well nigh oppressive—one felt some hand must drop.

From beginning to end of the allegro not a disturbing sound arose throughout the hall, but on the closing chord of the overture, there burst one deep toll of wonderful applause. I can only call it a toll; it was simultaneous. The conductor looked over his shoulder, and slightly shook his head. It was enough, and silence reigned as the heavenly sympathy of the recitative trembled from the strings surcharged with fire. Here it was as if he whispered "Hush!" for the sobbing staccato of the accompaniment I never heard so low; it was silvery, almost

awful. The baton stirred languidly, as the stem of a wind-swept lily, in those pointed fingers.

Nor would he suffer any violence to be done to the solemn brightness of the aria. It was not until we all arose that he raised his arm, and impetuously, almost imperiously, fixed upon us his eyes. He glanced not *a moment* at the score, he never turned a leaf, but he urged the time majestically, and his rapturous beauty brightened as the voices firmly, safely, swelled over the sustaining chords, launched in glory upon those waves of sound.

I almost forget the festival. I am not certain that I remembered who I was, or where I was, but I seemed to be singing at every pore. I seemed pouring out my life instead of my voice; but the feeling I had of being irresistibly borne along was so transporting, that I can conceive of nothing else like it, until after death.

CHAPTER IX

THE chorus, I learned afterwards, was never recalled so proudly true, so perfect, so flexible; but it was not only not difficult to keep in, it was impossible to get out. So every one said among my choral contemporaries afterwards.

I might recall how the arias told, invested with that same charm of subdued and softened fulness; I might name each chorus, bent to such strength by a might scarcely mortal; but I dare not anticipate my after acquaintance with a musician who, himself supreme, has alone known how to interpret the works of others. I will merely advert to the extraordinary calm that pervaded the audience during the first part.

Tremendous in revenge, perfectly tremendous, was the uproar between the parts, for there was a pause and clearance for a quarter of an hour. I could not have moved for some moments if I had wished it; as it was, I was nearly pressed to death. Everybody was talking; a clamour filled the air. I saw Lenhart Davy afar off, but he could not get to me. He looked quite white, and his eyes sparkled. As for me, I could not help thinking the world was coming to an end, so thirsty I felt, so dry, so shaken from head to foot. I could scarcely feel the ground, and I could not lift my knees, they were so stiff.

But still with infatuation I watched the conductor, though I

suffered not my eyes to wander to his face; I dared not look at him, I felt too awful. He was suddenly surrounded by gentlemen, the members of the committee. I knew they were there, bustling, skurrying, and I listened to their intrusive tones. As the chorus pressed by me I was obliged to advance a little, and I heard, in a quiet foreign accent, delicate as clear, these words: "Nothing, thank you, but a glass of pure water."

Trembling, hot, and dizzy, almost mad with impatience, I pushed through the crowd; it was rather thinner now, but I had to drive my head against many a knot, and when I could not divide the groups I dived underneath their arms. I cannot tell how I got out, but I literally leaped the stairs; in two or three steps I cleared the gallery. Once in the refreshment-room, I snatched a glass jug that stood in a pail filled with lumps of ice, and a tumbler, and made away with them before the lady who was superintending that table had turned her head. I had never a stumbling footstep, and though I sprang back again, I did not spill a drop. I knew the hall was half empty, so taking a short way that led me into it, I came to the bottom of the orchestra. I stood the tumbler upon a form, and filling it to the brim, left the beaker behind me, and rushed up the orchestra stairs.

He was still there, leaning upon the score, with his hands upon his face, and his eyes hidden. I advanced very quietly, but he heard me, and without raising himself from the desk let his hands fall, elevated his countenance, and watched me as I approached him.

I trembled so violently then, taken with a fresh shudder of excitement, that I could not lift the tumbler to present it. I saw a person from the other side advancing with a tray, and dreading to be supplanted, I looked up with desperate entreaty. The unknown stretched his arm and raised the glass, taking it from me, to his lips. Around those lips a shadowy half-smile was playing, but they were white with fatigue or excitement, and he drank the water instantly, as if athirst.

Then he returned to me the glass, empty, with a gentle but absent air, paused one moment, and now, as if restored to himself, fully regarded me, and fully smiled.

Down-gazing, those deep-coloured eyes upon me seemed distant as the stars of heaven; but there was an almost pitying sweetness in his tone as he addressed me. I shall never forget that tone, nor how my eyelids quivered with the longing want to weep.

"It was very refreshing," he said. "How much more strengthening is water than wine! Thank you for the trouble you took to fetch it. And you, you sang also in the chorus. It was beautifully done."

"May I tell them so, sir?" I asked him, eagerly, without being able to help speaking in *some* reply.

"Yes, every one, but, above all, the little ones,"—and again he faintly smiled.

Then he turned to the score, and drooping over the desk, seemed to pass back into himself, alone, by himself companioned. And in an agony of fear lest I should intrude for a moment even, I sped as fast as I had entered from his mysterious presence.

To this hour I cannot find in my memory the tone in which he spoke that day. Though I have heard that voice so often since—have listened to it in a trance of life—I can never realise *it*; it was too unearthly, and became part of what I shall be, having distilled from the essence of my being, as I am.

Well, I came upon Lenhart Davy in one of the passages, as I was running back. I fell, in fact, against him, and he caught me in his arms.

"Charles Auchester! where have you been? You have frightened me sorely. I thought I had lost you, I did indeed, and have been looking for you ever since we came out of the hall."

As soon as I could collect enough of myself to put into words, I exclaimed ecstatically, "Oh, Mr. Davy! I have been talking to the man in the orchestra!"

"You have, indeed, you presumptuous atomy!" and he laughed in his own way, adding, "I did not expect you would blow into an hero quite so soon. And is our hero up there still? My dear Charles, you must have been mistaken, he must be in the committee-room."

"No, I was not. The idea of my mistaking! as if anybody else could be like him! He is up there now, and he would not come down, though they asked him; and he said he would only drink a glass of water, and I heard him, for I waited to see, and I fetched it, and he drank it—there!" and I flung myself round Davy again, almost exhausted with joy.

"And he spoke to you, did he, Charles? My own little boy, be still, or I shall have to fetch *you* a glass of water. I am really afraid of all this excitement, for which you seem to come in naturally."

"So I do, Mr. Davy; but do tell me who is that man?"

"I cannot tell," said Davy, himself so flushed now that I could hardly think him the same person—"unless, by some extraordinary chance, it may be Milans-André."

"No! no!" exclaimed one of our contemporaries, who, in returning to the orchestra, overheard the remark. "No! no! it is not Milans-André. Mr. Hermann, the leader, has seen Milans-André in Paris. No, it is some nobleman, they say, a German prince. They all know Handel in Germany."

"Nonsense!" replied Davy: "they don't know Handel better in Germany than we do in England;" but he spoke as if to me, having turned from the person who addressed him.

"Don't they, Mr. Davy? But he does look like a prince."

"Not a *German* prince, my Charles! He is more like one of your favourite Jews; and that is where it is, no doubt."

"Davy! Davy!" exclaimed again another, one of the professors in the town. "Can it be Milans-André?"

"They say not, Mr. Westley. I do not know myself, but I should have thought Mons. André must be older than this gentleman, who does not look twenty."

"Oh, he is more than twenty."

"As you please," muttered Davy, merrily, as he turned again to me. "My boy, we must not stand here; we shall lose our old places. Do not forget to remain in yours when it is over, till I come to fetch you."

When it is over! Oh, cruel Lenhart Davy! to remind me that it would ever end. I felt it cruel then, but perhaps I felt too much; I always do, and I hope I always shall.

Again marshalled in our places (I having crept to mine), and again fitted in very tightly, we all arose. I suppose it was the oppression of so many round me standing, superadded to the strong excitement, but the whole time the chorus lasted, "Behold the Lamb of God," I could not sing. I stood and sobbed, but even then I had respect to Davy's neatly copied alto sheet, and I only shaded my eyes with that and wept upon the floor. Nobody near observed me; they were all singing with all their might; I alone dared to look down, ever down, and weep upon the floor.

Such tears I never shed; they were as necessary as dew after a cloudless day, and, to pursue my figure, I awoke again at the conclusion of the chorus to a deep rapturous serenity, pure as twilight, and gazed upwards at the stars, whose "smile was Paradise," with my heart again all voice.

I believe the chorus, "Lift up your heads!" will never again be heard in England as it was heard then, and I am quite certain of the "Hallelujah." It was as close, as clear, and the power that bound the band alike constrained the chorus; both seemed freed from all responsibility, and alone to depend upon the will that swayed, that stirred, with a spell real as supernatural, and sweet as strange.

Perhaps the most immediate consequence of such faultless interpretation was the remarkable stillness of the audience. Doubtless a few there were who were calm in critical pique, but I believe the majority dared not applaud, so decided had been the negative of that graceful sign at the commencement of the performance; besides a breathless curiosity brooded, as distinctly to be traced in the countenance of the crowd, as in their thrilling quietude. For thrilling it was indeed, though not so thrilling as the outbreak, the tempest out-rolling of pent-up satisfaction at the end of the final chorus. That chorus (it was well indeed it was the last) seemed alone to have exhausted the strength of the conductor; his arm suddenly seemed to tire, he entirely relaxed, and the delicate but burning hectic on each cheek alone remained, the seal of his celestial passion.

He turned as soon as the applause, instead of decreasing, persisted; for at first he had remained with his face towards the choir. As the shouts still reached him, and the sea of heads began to fluctuate, he bent a little in acknowledgment, but nevertheless preserved the same air of indifference and abstraction from all about, beneath him. Lingered only until the way was cleared below the orchestra steps, he retreated down them even before the applause had ceased; and before any one could approach him, without addressing any one, he left the hall.

And of him nothing afterwards was heard; I mean at that time. Not a soul in the whole town had learned his name, and the hotel at which he had slept the night before was in vain attacked by spies on every errand. The landlord could only say what he knew himself, that he was a stranger who had visited the place for the purpose of attending the festival, and who having fulfilled that purpose, had left the city unknown, unnamed, as he entered it.

I believe most children of my age would have had a fit of illness after an excitement of brain and of body so peculiar; but perhaps had I been less excited I should have been worse

off afterwards. As it was, the storm into which I had been wrought subsided of itself, and I was the better for it, just as Nature is said to be after her disturbances of a similar description. Davy took me home, and then set off to his own house, where he always seemed to have so much to do; and all my people were very kind to me in listening, while I, more calmly than any one would believe, expatiated upon our grand adventure. I was extremely amused to see how astonished Clo was to find me so reasonable, for her only fear had been, she informed my mother, that Charles would not settle to anything for weeks if he were allowed to go. And Millicent was very much astonished that I spoke so little of the performance itself. I could only defend myself by saying, "If you had seen him you would not wonder."

"Is he handsome, Charles?" said Lydia innocently, with her brown eyes fixed upon her thimble (which she held upon her finger, and was shocked to perceive a little tarnished). I was so angry that I felt myself turn quite sick, but I was good enough only to answer—"You would not think so." For so I believed. Millicent softly watched me and added, "Charlie means, I think, that it was a very beautiful face."

"I do," I said bluntly; "I shall never see a beautiful face again. You will never see one at all, as you have not seen *that*."

"Pity us, then, Charles," replied Millicent, in her gentlest voice.

I climbed upon her lap. "Oh, no, dear! it is you who must pity me, because you do not know what it is, and I do, and I have lost it."

Lydia lifted her eyes, and made them very round, but as I was put to bed directly, nobody heard any more of me that night.

CHAPTER X

It was very strange, or rather it was just natural, that I should feel so singularly low next day. I was not exactly tired, and I was not exactly miserable. I was perfectly blank, like a sunless autumn day, with no wind about. I lay very late in bed, and as I lay there I no more believed the events of yesterday than if they had been a dream. I was literally obliged to touch

myself, my hair, my face, and the bed-clothes, before I could persuade myself that I was not myself a dream. The cold bath restored me, into which I daily sprang, summer and winter alike, but I grew worse again after breakfast.

Yearning to re-excite myself in some fashion, I marched into the parlour and requested Clo to teach me as usual. There she was, in her grey silk gown, peering (with her short-sightedness) into Herodotus; but, though all my books were placed upon the table by her, I could tell very easily that she had not expected me, and was very much pleased I should come. Her approbation overcame me, and instead of blotting my copy with ink, I used my tears. They were tears I could no more have helped shedding than I could have helped breathing. Clo was very kind, she looked at me solemnly, not severely, and solemnly administered the consolation that they were the effect of excitement. I did not think so, I thought they were the effect of a want of excitement, but I said nothing to her.

I overcame them, and was quiet for the rest of the day, and for several days, but imagine what I suffered when I saw no more of Lenhart Davy. As the world in our house went on just the same as before the festival, and as I had no hand in keeping the house so charmingly, nor any part in committees for dinner, nor in pickling speculations, I was fairly left to myself with my new discovery about myself, namely, that I must be a musician, or I should perish.

Had I only seen Lenhart Davy, I could have told him all. I believe my attraction towards him was irresistible, or I should never have thought of him while he stayed away; it would have hurt me too much. For I was painfully, may be vainly, sensitive. I was not able to appreciate his delicacy of judgment as well as feeling, in abstaining from any further communication with us until we ourselves reminded him of us. I had no hope, and the four or five days I have mentioned as passing without his apparition seemed to annihilate my future. I quite drooped, I could not help it, and my mother was evidently anxious. She made me bring out my tongue a dozen times a-day, and she continually sighed as if reproaching herself with something. How long it seemed! quite four months as I used to reckon—I never once alluded to Lenhart Davy; but others did, at least not Millicent, but Lydia and my eldest sister. Lydia made the observation that perhaps he was too modest to come without a special invitation, but Clo hurt me far more, by saying that he had no doubt better

engagements elsewhere. On the evening of the fifth day, I was sitting upon the stool in the parlour by the window, after tea, endeavouring to gather my wandering fancies to "Simple Susan," her simple woes, pleasures, and loves (for Clo was there, and I did not wish to be noticed)—when Millicent came into the room, and said my mother wished to speak to me upstairs. I went out with Millicent. "What does she want—I mean mother?" I inquired, no doubt rather peevishly.

"She wants to ask you a question you will like to answer, Charles."

"Shall I?—what is it? I don't think I shall like to answer any question. Oh, Millicent!" and I hid my small face in the folds of her dark blue frock.

"Come, Charles! you know I would not deceive you. Darling you must not feel so much."

And she stooped to kiss me, smiling, though the tears were in her eyes. I still persisted in hiding my head, and when we reached the door of the dressing-room, I went in crying. My mother sat in a great white chair beside the fire; next her stood a small table covered with hose, the hose of the whole household.

"How, Charles! how now! Be a man, or at least a boy, or I am sure I had better not ask you what I sent for you to answer. Come, say, would you like to sing in Mr. Davy's class? You must not give up your old lessons, nor must you forget to take great pains to write, to cipher, and to read as well, but I think you are very fond of singing since you found your voice, and Mr. Davy, to whom I wrote, says you can be of use to him, and that he will be so very good as to teach you what he teaches the others, to understand what you sing."

Dear Millicent! I knew I owed it all to her, for there had been that in her face, her manner, and her kind eyes that told me she had felt for me in my desolation, and now as she stood apart from my mother and me, I ran to her and told her so, that I knew it all. I will not dwell upon the solicitude of Clo, lest I should become unmanageable in the midst of my satisfaction, nor upon Lydia's amazement at my mother's allowing me to join the class, but I well recollect how Millicent kept fast by me; her will, as it were, upon mine, and her reminding calmness ever possessing me, lest I should by my ecstatic behaviour forfeit my right to my new privileges. I was quite good enough, though, in the general opinion, to be permitted to go as arranged, on the following Tuesday evening.

Lenhart Davy dined with us on Sunday, by special invitation written by my mother, conveyed by my Margareth. He told me that I must not mistake his silence if he spoke not to me nor noticed me when he was amidst his pupils. I perfectly understood even then how much depended upon his sagacious self-dependence.

The class assembled from six till eight in the evening, twice a week: the room Davy convoked it in was one he hired expressly. My mother sent me with Margareth, who was to fetch me again at the expiration of two hours, at least during the winter which was fast approaching.

And thus, had it not been for the festival, I should have been at once initiated into "Choral life."

Though, indeed, but for that glorious time, and my own fantastic courage, first-fruit of a musical temperament, I had perhaps never been taught to give that name where I can now bestow none other; so completely has choral worship passed into my life.

When Margareth left me at the door of a house I had never entered—though I knew it well, for it was let out in auction-rooms, for committees, and the like—I felt far more wild and lost than when I attended the grand rehearsal hand in hand with Lenhart Davy. He was my master though, I remembered this, and also that he expected a great deal of me, for he had told me so, and that he had appointed me a high place among the altos. I had my numbered ticket in my hand, and upon it my name, and I showed it to a man who was standing above at the top of the steep staircase. He looked at it, nodded, and pushed it in.

The room was tolerably large and high, and lighted by gas-burners, which fully illustrated the bareness of wall, and floor, and ceiling. Accustomed to carpets in every chamber, nay, in every passage, I was horrified to hear my own footfall upon the boards, as I traversed the backs of those raised forms, one above the other, full of people. Boys and men, and women and girls, seemed all mixed up together, and all watching me; for I was late, and quite dreamy with walking through the twilight town. Several beckoning hands were raised as I inquired for the place of the altos, and I took my seat just where a number nailed to the form answered to the number on my ticket.

CHAPTER XI

I WAS too satisfied to have found my way safely in, and too glad to feel deposited somewhere, to gaze round me just then; but a door opened with a creaking hinge on the ground floor below, and as perfect in my eyes as ever, stepped forth Lenhart Davy, and bowed to his whole class. He carried a little time-stick in his hands, but nothing else, and as he placed himself in front, immediately beneath the lowest form, I was conscious, though I believe no one else present could be, of the powerful control he had placed as a barrier between himself and those before him; between his active and his passive being.

He began to address us in his fine, easy tones, in language pure enough for the proudest intellect, sufficiently simple for the least cultured ear; and he spoke chiefly of what he had said the time before, recapitulating, and pausing to receive questions or to elicit answers. But all he said, whatever it was to others, was to me a highly spiritual analysis of what most teachers endeavour to lower and to explain away—the mystery and integrity of the musical Art.

He touched very lightly upon theory, but expounded sounds by signs in a manner of his own, which it is not necessary to communicate, as its results were those of no system whatever, but was applied by wisdom, and enforced by gradual acquaintance.

We did not begin to sing for at least half an hour, but he then unlocked a huge closet, drew forth an enormous board, and mapped thereon in white chalk the exercises of his own preparation for our evening's practice. These were pure, were simple, as his introductory address.

As I have said, the class was only just organised, but it was not a very small one; there must have been sixty or seventy present that night. I was in the topmost row of altos, and as soon as we began to sing, I was irresistibly attracted to those about me; and to identify them with their voices was for me a singular fascination. I was but the fourth from the wall on my side, and a burner was directly above me. I took advantage of the light to criticise the countenances of my nearer contemporaries, who were all absorbed in watching our master's evolutions. I could not look at him until I had acquainted myself with my locality, as far as I could without staring, or being stared at. Next the wall, two boys (so alike

that they could only have been brothers) nestled and bawled; they were dark-hued, yet sallow, and not inviting. I concluded they came from some factory, and so they did, but they did not please me enough to detain my attention—they were beneath my own grade. So was a little girl nearest to them, and next to me, but I could not help regarding her. She had the most imperturbable gaze I ever met—great eyes of a yellow hazel, with no more expression in them than water—but her cheeks were brightly coloured, and her long auburn hair was curled to her waist.

An ease pervaded her that was more than elegance. She leaned and she lounged, singing in a flexible voice, without the slightest effort, and as carelessly as she looked. She wore a pink gingham frock, ill made to a degree, but her slender figure moved in and out of it like a reed; her hands were fitted into discoloured light kid gloves, and she had on an amber necklace. This alone would have disgusted me, if she had not looked so unconcerned, so strange, and if I had not thought her hair so very pretty; but I did, and, as I have said, I could not avoid regarding her. She had her bonnet in her lap (a bruised muslin one, with tumbled satin strings), and I was surveying it rather closely, when she turned upon me, and whispered loud, not low (and then went on singing herself, instantly), "Why don't you sing?" Scared and shocked, I drew myself away from her as far as possible, and moved my eyes to my other neighbour. It was a girl too; but I instantly felt the words "young lady" to be appropriate, though I knew not wherefore, except that she was, as it were, so perfectly self-possessed. She must be older than I am (it occurred to me), but I could not tell how much. She was, in fact, about fourteen.

It was some relief to look upon her, after being attacked by the quick little being on my right hand, because she seemed as utterly indisposed to address me as the other had been determined. She did not seem even to see me, nor give the least glance at anybody, or anything, except Lenhart Davy and his board. Upon them she fastened her whole expression, and she sang with assiduous calmness. So, though I sang too, fearing my friend would observe my silence, I turned quite towards my young lady, and watched her intensely—she noticing me no more than she would have noticed a fly walking upon the wall, or upon Lenhart Davy's board. I was very fastidious then, whatever I may be now, and I seldom gazed upon a face or the pleasure of seeing it. In this instance, I experienced

a feeling beyond pleasure, so exquisitely did the countenance beside me harmonise with something in myself. Not strictly fine, nor severely perfect in outline or of hue, this sweet face shone in glory not its own—the most ardent musical intention lay upon the eyes, the lips, the brow; and the deep lashes themselves seemed born to shade from too much brightness a beholder like myself.

I thought her a young woman, and so she was, compared with my age, at least; but my awe and her exaltation were measured by a distant self-possession towards me, towards all. She was not dressed with much more costliness than my wild little rebuker, but her plain black frock fitted her beautifully, and her dark gloves, and the dark ribbon on her hat, and her little round muff, satisfied me as to her gentle and her womanly pretensions.

In linking these adjectives, you will realise one of my infatuations wherever they are substantively found. Enough; I dared not leave off singing, and my voice was rather strong, so I could not clearly decide upon hers, until Davy wrote up a few intervals for unisons, which very few of us achieved on the instant—my calm companion was among those who did. Her voice was more touching than any I had ever heard, and a true contralto; only more soft than deep, more distilling than low. But unknowing as I was, I was certain she had sung, and had learned to sing, long before she had joined the class; for in her singing there was that purified quality which reminds one (it did me) of filtered water, and she pronounced most skilfully the varied vocables. I felt afterwards that she must have been annoyed at my pertinacious scrutiny, but she betrayed not the remotest cognisance of me or my regards; and this indifference compelled me to watch her far more than sympathetic behaviour would have done. That evening seemed long to me while we were at work, but I could not bear the breaking-up. I had become, as it were, connected with my companions, though we had not exchanged a word. I was rather disposed to wait and see who would join my little girl with her wild eyes, and my serene young lady. I believe I should have done so, but Lenhart Davy kindly came up from below and shook hands with me, and while I was receiving and returning his greeting, they were lost in the general crowd.

He took me himself down stairs to Margareth, who was awaiting me with a cloak and a comforter in a little unfurnished room; and then he himself departed, looking very tired.

CHAPTER XII

I DID not see him again until the next class-night. It was strange to find the same faces about me; and, above all, my two heroines, dressed exactly as on the first occasion, except that the pink frock was rather less brilliant. I listened eagerly for those pure tones to swell, communing with my own, and I was not disappointed. We did not sing anything that I can specify at present; but it was more than pleasure—it was vitality to me, to fling out my own buoyant notes far and wide, supported, as it were, by an atmosphere of commingling sounds. I suppose, therefore, that I may have been singing very loud, when the daring little head out of the muslin bonnet put itself into my face and chanted, in strict attention to Davy's rules all the time, "How beautifully you do sing!" I was hushed for the moment, and should have been vexed if I had not been frightened; for I was ridiculously timorous as a child.

She then brought from the crown of her bonnet a paper full of bonbons, which she opened and presented to me. I replied, very sharply in a low voice, "I don't eat while I am singing;" and should have taken no more notice of her, but she now raised upon me her large eyes to the full, and still pushed the bonbon paper at me—almost in my face too. I was too well bred to push it away, but too honest not to say, when she still persisted in offering the saccharine conglomeration, "I don't like curl papers." The child turned from me with a fierce gesture, but her eyes were now swimming in tears. I was astonished, angry, melted. I at length reproached myself; and though I could not bring myself to touch the coloured chocolates, crumbled up as they had been in her hand, I did condescend to whisper, "Never mind!" and she took out her handkerchief to wipe her eyes.

Now, all this while my young lady took no heed, and I felt almost sure she must have noticed us; but she did not turn to the large-eyed maiden, and I occupied myself with both. That night again Davy joined me, and I only managed to catch a glimpse of the muslin bonneted, holding her bonbons still in one dirty glove, and with the other taking the hand of a huge, high-shouldered man, going out with the crowd.

Oh! Davy was too deep for me, and delicate as deep! The next night of our meeting, my number was moved to the other

side of my serene neighbour, who at present divided me from the hazel eyes and the ringlets. It never occurred to me that *he* had done it; I thought it to be a mistake, and fully intended, like a curious manikin, to go back another time to my old quarters. I could not help looking at the little one to see whether I was watched, but no; with a coquetry I was too young to appreciate, and she ought to have been too young to exercise, she sang with all her might; never once turning her eyes towards me. I found at length the fascinations of our choral force too strong not to submerge her slight individuality, and soon I forgot she was there, though I never forgot that serene voice breathing by my side faint prophecies I could not render to myself in any form, except that they had to do with myself, and with music alike my very own. I do not think any musical taste was ever fed and fostered early in an atmosphere so pure as mine; for Lenhart Davy's class, when fully organised and entirely submitted to him, seemed invested with his own double peculiarity—subdued, yet strong. We were initiated this evening into an ancient anthem, whose effect, when it was permitted to us to interpret, was such that I could not repress my satisfaction, and I said aloud, though I did not confront my companion, "That is something like!" My serene contralto answered, strangely to my anticipations, and with the superior womanliness I have ascribed to her, "Is it not glorious?"

It was an anthem in the severe style, that tells so powerfully in four-voiced harmony, and the parts were copied upon gigantic tablets in front, against the wall that was Davy's back-ground.

"I cannot see," said the other little creature, pulling the contralto's black silk gown.

"I am sorry for you," replied the other, "but I believe that you can see, Laura, as well as I can; you mean you will not trouble yourself, or that you are idle to-night."

"And what if I do? I hate those horrid hymn sort of tunes, they will not be of any use to me."

"Silence!" uttered the voice of Lenhart Davy. There was seldom occasion for him to say so, but just now there had been a pause before we repeated the first movement of the anthem.

He told me he had a little leisure that evening, and would take me home. I was enchanted, and fully meant to ask him to come in with me; but I actually forgot it until after he had turned away. Margareth reproved me very seriously, "Your sisters would have asked him in, Master Charles, to supper."

But the fact was, I had been occupied with my own world too much. I had said to him directly we were in the street, "Dear Mr. Davy, who are those two girls whose seats are the nearest to mine?"

"They belong to the class like yourself, as you perceive, but they are not persons you would be likely to meet anywhere else."

"Why not, Sir? I should like to be friends with all the singers."

Davy smiled—"So you may be, in singing, and, I hope, will be; but they are not all companions for you *out* of the class. You know that very well."

"I suppose, Sir, you mean that some are poorer than we are, some not so well brought up, some too old, and all that?"

"I did, certainly; but not only so. You had better not make too many friends at your time of life—rather too few than too many. Ask your mother if I am not correct. You see, she has a right to expect that you should love home best at present."

"I always should love *home* best," I answered quickly, and I remember well how Davy sighed.

"You mean what even every boy must feel, that you should like to make a home for yourself; but the reward is after the race—the victory at the end of the struggle."

It appeared to me very readily that he here addressed something in his own soul, for his voice had fallen. I urged—"I know it, Sir; but do tell me the names of those two girls,—I won't let them know you told me."

He laughed long and heartily. "Oh! yes, willingly; you would soon have heard their names, though. The little one is Laura Lemark, the child of a person who has a great deal to do with the theatres in this town; and she is training for a dancer, besides being already a singer in the chorus at a certain theatre. Your mother would not like you to visit her, you may be sure; and therefore you should not try to know her. I placed you near her because she is the most knowing of all my pupils, except Miss Benette, the young person who sat next you this evening."

"With the lovely voice? Oh! I should never know *her* if I wished it."

"You need not wish it; but even if you did, she would never become troublesome in any respect. She is too calm, too modest."

"And pray, tell me, Sir, is she to be a dancer too?"

"No, oh, no! She will decidedly become one of the finest singers in England; but I believe she will not go upon the stage."

"You call the theatre the stage, Sir, don't you?"

"Yes, in this instance."

"But why won't she go upon the stage? Cannot she act?"

"She does not think she is called to it by any special gift."

"Did she say those words, Sir?"

"Those very words."

"I thought she would just say them, Sir. Does she know you very well?"

"She is my own pupil."

"Oh, out of the class, Sir, I suppose?"

"Yes, I teach her in my house."

"Sir, I wish you taught me in your house."

"I should say too, that I wished it," answered Davy, sweetly; "but you have a sister to teach you at home, and Clara Benette has no one."

"I should like to have no one—to teach me I mean—if you would teach me. If my mother said yes, would you, Sir?"

"For a little while I would with pleasure."

"Why not long, Sir? I mean, why only for a little while?"

"Because there are others of whom you ought to learn, and *will* learn, I am persuaded"—he added, almost dreamingly, as he turned me to the moonlight, now overspread about us, and surveyed me seriously. "The little violin-face, you know Charles, I cannot be mistaken in those lines."

"I would rather sing, Sir."

"Ah! that is because you have not tried anything else."

"But, sir, *you* sing."

"I suppose that I must say as Miss Benette does, 'I have a special gift' that way," replied Davy, laughing.

"You have a special gift all the ways, I think, Sir," I cried as I ran into our house. I told Millicent all he had said, except that Laura was to be a dancer, and yet I cannot tell why I left this out, for there was that about her fairly repelling me, and at the same time I felt as if exposed to some power through her, and could not restrain myself from a desire to see her again. Millicent told my mother all that I had said to *her* the next morning at breakfast. My mother, who had as much worldliness as any of us, and that was just none, was mightily amused at my new interests; she could not make up her mind about the private lessons yet; she thought me too young, and that I

had plenty of time before me—at present the class was sufficient excitement, and gave me enough to do. Clo quite coincided here; she, if anything, thought it rather too much already, though a very good thing indeed.

CHAPTER XIII

NEXT time we met we began the anthem after our first exercise. Laura—by this time she was always Laura in my own world—nodded at me. She had on a green silk frock to-night; and surely no colour could have so enhanced the clarified brightness of her strange eyes. Davy was pleased with us, but not with our enunciation of certain syllables. He requested us as a favour to practise between that meeting and the next. There were a great many assents, and Laura was very open in her “yes.” Miss Benette whispered to herself, “of course.” And I, unable to resist the opportunity, whispered to her, “Does he mean that we are to practise alone, or one by one?”

“Mr. Davy will lend us our parts, and I dare say will copy them on purpose,” she replied. “It will be better to practise alone, or at least one or two together, than a great many or even a few. We can more easily detect our faults.”

“How well she speaks!” I thought—“quite as prettily as Millicent; her accent is very good I am sure,”—and I again addressed her. “I do not think you have any faults at all—your voice seems able to do anything.”

“I do nothing at all with it, it seems to me, and that I have very little voice at present. I think we had better not talk, because it seems so careless.”

“Talk to me,” broke in Laura from beyond Miss Benette; but I would not; I steadily looked in front, full of a new plan of mine. I must explain that we proceeded slowly, because Davy’s instructions were complete; perhaps too ideal for the majority, but for some and for me there was an ineffaceable conviction in every novel utterance.

Just before we separated, I ventured to make my request. “Miss Benette!” I said, and she almost stared, quite started to find I knew her name; “Mr. Davy told me who you were—will you let me come and practise with you? He will tell you my name if you must know it, but I should so like to sing with you; I do so admire your voice.” I spoke with the most

perfect innocence, at the same time quite madly wishing to know her; I did not mean to be overheard, but on the instant Laura looked over.

"You don't ask *me*."

"Because I don't care about your voice," I answered, bluntly. She again gazed at me brightly, her eyes swimming.

"Oh, hush!" whispered Miss Benette, "you have hurt her, poor little thing."

"How very good you are!" I returned, scarcely knowing what to say—"I always speak the truth."

"Yes, I should think so; but it is not good taste to dislike Laura's voice, for it is very pretty."

"Come, Miss Benette, do make haste and tell me whether you will let me sing with you to-morrow."

"I do not mind if your friends will not object."

"Tell me where you live, then."

"In St. Anthony's Lane, just by the new foundation. There is a tree in front, but no garden. You must not come, if you please, until after one o'clock, because I have to practise for my other lessons."

"Good-night."

She ran off, having bowed a little curtsey—Laura had left while we were talking.

"Now," thought I, "I shall have it all out, who she is, and what she does, and I will make Millicent go to see her." Davy here joined me.

"So you have made friends with Miss Benette."

"Yes, Sir;" but I did not tell him I was going to practise with her, for fear anything should prevent my going.

"She is an excellent young person, and will be a true artist. Nevertheless, remember my injunction—rather too few friends than too many."

"I mean to keep friends with her, and to make my sister friends with her."

"Your sister does not want friends, I should think."

"Oh, Sir, did you ever find out who the conductor was?"

"Nobody knows—it is very singular," and he raised his voice, "that he has never been heard of since, and had not been seen before by anybody present, though so many foreign professors were in the hall. In London they persist it was Milans-André, though André has himself contradicted the assertion."

"I should like to hear Milans-André."

"You will some day, no doubt."

"Do you think I shall?"

"I feel in myself quite sure. Now, good-night to you."

"Do come in, Sir, and have some supper, please."

But Davy was off in the moonlight before the door could be opened into our house.

When I told Millicent I was going to practise with one of the class, she thought fit to tell my mother. My mother made various inquiries, but I satisfied her by assuring her it was one of Davy's own pupils, and his favourite; and I contrived not to be asked whether it was a young lady; I let them think just at that time it was a young gentleman about my own standing. The only direct injunction laid upon me was, that I should be home for tea at five o'clock; and as I did not leave our house until after our one o'clock dinner, this did not give me very much time; but I ran the whole way.

I forgot to mention that Davy had lent each of us our parts beautifully copied; at least he had lent them to all who engaged to practise, and I was one. I had rolled it up very neatly.

I soon found the house, but I was certainly astonished when I did find it. I could not believe such a creature as Miss Benette could remain so bright, buried down there. It was the last house of a very dull row, all let out in lodgings—the meanest in the town except the very poor.

It was no absurd notion of relative inferiority with which I surveyed it: I was pained at the positive fact that the person to whom I had taken such a fancy should be obliged to remain where I felt as if I should never be able to breathe. I lingered but a moment though, and then I touched a little heavy distorted knocker that hung nearly at the bottom of the door; how unlike, I thought, to Lenhart Davy's tiny castle under lock and key! Presently the door was opened by a person, the like of whom I had never seen in all my small experience—a universal servant, required to be ubiquitous; let this description suffice. I asked for Miss Benette. "The first door to the right, upstairs," was the reply; and passing along a dark entry, I began to ascend them, steep and carpetless. I seemed, however, to revive when I perceived how lately the wooden steps had been washed; there was not a foot-mark all the way up to the top, and they smelt of soap and water.

I found several doors to embarrass me on the landing, all painted black; but I heard tones in one direction that decided

me to knock. A voice as soft as Millicent's responded, "Come in."

Oh, how strangely I felt when I entered! to the full as strangely as when I first saw Davy's sanctum. No less a sanctum this, I remember thinking, to the eyes that behold the pure in heart. It was so exquisitely tidy. I felt at once that my selfish sensibilities had nothing to fear; the room was indeed small, but no book walls darkened gloriously the daylight; the fireplace was hideous, the carpet coarse and glaring, the paper was crude green—I hate crude greens more than yellow blues—and the chairs were rush-bottomed, every one. But she for whom I came was seated at the window, singing; she held some piece of work in her hand, which she laid upon the table when I entered. Pardon my reverting to the table; I could not keep my eyes from it. It was covered with specimens of work; such work as I had never seen, as I shall never see again, though all my sisters could embroider, could stitch, could sew with the very best. She did not like me to look at it though, I thought, for she drew me to the window by showing me a chair she had set for me close beside her own. The only luxury amidst the furniture was a mahogany music-stand, which was placed before our two seats. One part lay upon the stand, but it was not in Lenhart Davy's autography.

"Did you copy that part yourself, Miss Benette?" said I, unable to restrain the question.

"Yes, I thought it too much that Mr. Davy should copy all the parts himself for us."

"Does he?"

"Oh, yes, did you not know it? But we must not talk, we must work. Let us be very careful."

"You show me how; please to sing it once alone."

She struck the tuning-fork upon the desk, and without the slightest hesitation, flush, or effort, she began. One would not have deemed it an incomplete fragment of score, it resounded in my very brain like perfect harmony, so strangely did my own ear infer the intermediate sounds.

"Oh, how lovely! how exquisite it must be to feel you can do so much!" I exclaimed, as her unfaltering accent thrilled the last amen,—

"I seem never to have done anything, as I told you before; it is necessary to do *so* much. Now sing it alone once all through, and I will correct you as Mr. Davy corrects me."

I complied instantly, feeling her very presence would be

instruction, forgetting, or not conscious how young she was. She corrected me a great deal, though with the utmost simplicity. I was astonished at the depth of her remarks, though too ignorant to conceive that they broke as mere ripples from the soundless deeps of genius. Then we sang together, and she wandered into the soprano part. I was transported; I was eager to retain her good opinion, and took immense pains. But it never struck me all the time that it was strange she should be alone; apparently alone, I mean. I was too purely happy in her society. She sat as serenely as at the class, and criticised as severely as our master.

"It is getting late," she said at last, "and I think you had better go. Besides, I must go on with my work. If you are so kind as to come and practise with me again, I must work while I sing, as I do when I am alone."

"Oh, why did you not to-day?"

"I thought it would not be polite the first time," answered she, as gravely as a judge, and I never felt so delighted with anything in all my life. I looked up at her eyes, but the lashes were so long I could not see them, for *she* was looking down.

"Will you think me rude if I ask to look at your work?"

"You may look at what I am going to send to the shop."

"Oh, what shop?"

She got out of her chair and moved to the table. There was no smile upon her baby-mouth. She pointed to the articles I had noticed, but had not dared to examine. They were, indeed, sights to see, one and all. Such delicate frock-bodies and sprigged caps for infants; such toilette cushions, rich with patterns, like ingrained pearls; such rolls of lace, with running gossamer leaves, or edges fine as the pinked carnations in Davy's garden. There were also collars with broad, white leaves and peeping buds, or wreathing embroidery like seaweed, or blanched moss, or magnified snow, or whatever you can think of as most unlike work. Then there was a central basket, lined with white satin, in which lay six cambric handkerchiefs, with all the folded corners outwards, each corner of which shone as if dead-silvered with the exquisitely-wrought crest and motto of an ancient coroneted family.

"Oh, I never did see anything like them!" was all I could get out, after peering into everything till the excelling whiteness pained my sight. "Do tell me where you send them?"

"I used to send them to Madame Varneckel's, in High

Street, but she cheated me, and I send them now to the Quaker's, in Albemarle Square."

"You sell them, then?"

"Yes, of course; I should not work else. I do not love it."

"They ought to give you a hundred guineas for those."

"I have a hundred guineas already."

"You have!" I quite startled her by the start I gave. I very nearly said, "Then why do you live up here?" but I felt, in time, that it would be rude.

"Oh! I must get four hundred more, and that will take me two years, or perhaps three, unless my voice comes out like a flower." Here her baby-mouth burst into a smile most radiant, a rose of light!

"Oh, Miss Benette, everything you say is like one of the German stories—a Märchen, you know."

"Oh, do you talk German? I love it. I always spoke it till I came to this city."

"What a pity you came! at least, I should have been very sorry if you had not come; but I mean, I should have thought you would like Germany best."

"So I should, but I could not help coming; I was a baby when I came. Mr. Davy brought me over in his arms, and he was just as old then as I am now."

"How very odd! Mr. Davy never told me he had brought you here."

"Oh, no! he would not tell you all the good things he has done."

"He has done me good, quite as much good as he can have done to you; but I should so like to hear all about it."

"You must not stay—you *shall* go," she answered, with her grave sweetness of voice and manner; "and if you are not in time to-day, we shall never practise again. I shall be very sorry, for I like to sing with you."

I was not in time, and I got the nearest thing to a scolding from my mother, and a long reproof from Clo. She questioned me as to where I had been, and I was obliged to answer. The locality did not satisfy her; she said it was a low neighbourhood, and one in which I might catch all sorts of diseases. I persisted that it was as high and dry as we were, and possessed an advantage over us in that it had better air, being, as it was, all but out in the fields. My mother was rather puzzled about the whole matter, but she declared her confidence in me, and I was contented as she ever contents me. I was very grateful

to her, and assured them all how superior was Miss Benette to all the members of the class. I also supplicated Millicent to accompany me the next time I should be allowed to go, that she might see the beautiful work.

"I cannot go, my dear Charles," she returned. "If this young lady be what you yourself make her out to be, it would be taking a great liberty; and besides, she could not want me; I do not sing in the class."

But she looked very much as if she wished she did.

"I just wish you would ask Mr. Davy about her, that's all."

CHAPTER XIV

WHEN I went to the class next time I was very eager to catch Mr. Davy, that I might explain to him where I had been, for I did not like acting without his cognisance. However, he was already down below when I arrived. My fair companions were both in their places, but, to my astonishment, Miss Benette took no notice of me. Her sweet face was as grave as it was before I caught from under those long lashes the azure light upon my own for the first time. Certain that she did not mean to offend me, I got on very well though, and Davy was very much pleased with our success.

Little Laura looked very pale; her hair was out of its curl, and altogether she had an appearance as if she had been dragged through a river, lost and forlorn, and scarcely sensible. She sang languidly, but Miss Benette's clinging tones would not suffer me to be aware of any except hers and my own.

Davy taught us something about Gregorian chants, and gave us a few to practise, besides a new but extremely simple service of his own. "He wrote that for us, I suppose," I ventured, and Clara nodded seriously, but made no assent in words. Afterwards she seemed to remember me again as her ally; for as Davy wished us his adieu in his wonted free "Good-night!" she spoke to me of her own accord.

"I think it was all the better that we practised."

"Oh, was it not? Suppose we practise again."

"I should like it if you will come at the same time, and not stay longer; and Laura can come too—can she not?"

I did not exactly like this idea, but I could not contradict the calm, mellow voice.

"Oh, if she will practise."

"Of course she will practise if she comes on purpose."

"I don't care about coming!" exclaimed the child, in a low, fretful voice. "I know I shan't get out, either."

"Yes, you shall. I will coax your papa. Look, Laura! there he is waiting for you."

The child ran off instantly, with an air of fear over all her fatigue, and I felt sure she was not treated like a child. But I said nothing about it then.

"Sir!" said I to Mr. Davy, "pray walk a little way, for I want to tell you something. My mother particularly requests that you will go to our house to sup with us this evening."

"I will accept her kindness with the greatest pleasure, as I happen to be less engaged than usual."

Davy never bent his duty to his pleasure, rather the reverse.

"I went to practise with Miss Benette the day before yesterday."

"So she told me."

"She told you herself?"

"Yes, when she came to my house for her lesson last afternoon. I was very glad to hear it, because such singing as hers will improve yours. But I should like to tell your mother how she is connected with me."

"How was it, Sir?"

"Oh, I shall make a long story for her; but enough for you that her father was very good to me when I was an orphan boy, and begged my way through Germany. He taught me all that I now teach you, and, when he died, he asked me to take care of his baby and his lessons. She was only born that he might see her, and die."

"Oh, Sir, how strange! Poor man! he must have been very sorry."

"He was not sorry to go, for he loved his wife, and she went first."

"Oh, that was Miss Benette's mamma?"

"Yes, her lovely mamma."

"Of course she was lovely. If you please, Sir, tell me about her too." But Davy reserved his tale until we were at home.

My mother fully expected him, it was evident; for upon the table, besides the plain but perfectly ordered meal we always enjoyed at about nine o'clock, stood the supernumerary illustrations—in honour of a guest—of boiled custards, puff pastry, and our choicest preserves. My mother, too, was sitting by

the fire in a species of state, having her hands void of occupation, and her pocket-handkerchief outspread. Millicent and Lydia wore their dahlia-coloured poplin frocks—quite a Sunday costume—and Clo revealed herself in purple silk, singularly adapted for evening wear, as it looked black by candle-light!

I never sat up to supper except on very select occasions. I knew this would be one without being told so, and secured the next chair to my darling friend's.

I would that I could recall, in his own expressive language, his exact relation of his own history as told to us that night. It struck us that he should so earnestly acquaint us with every incident—at least, it surprised us then, but his after connection with ourselves explained it in that future.

No fiction could be more fraught with fascinating personality than his actual life. I pass over his birth in England (and in London), in a dark room over a dull book-shop, in his father's house. That father, from pure breeding and constitutional exclusiveness, had avoided all intercourse with his class, and conserved his social caste by his marriage only. I linger not upon his remembrance of his mother, Sybilla Lenhart—herself a Jewess, with the most exquisite musical ability—nor upon her death, in her only son's tenth year.

His father's pining melancholy meantime deepened into an abstraction of misery on her loss. The world and its claims lost their hold, and he died insolvent when Lenhart was scarcely twelve.

Then came his relation of romantic wanderings in Southern France and Germany, like a troubadour, or minnesinger, with guitar and song; of his accidental friendships and fancy fraternities, till he became choir-alto at a Lutheran church in the heart of the Eichen-Land. Then came the story of his attachment to the young, sage organist of that very church, who, in a fairy-like adventure, had married a count's youngest daughter, and never dared to disclose his alliance. Of her secret existence with him, in the topmost room of an old house, where she never dared to look out of the window to the street for fear she should be discovered and carried back—the etiquette requisite to cover such an abduction being quite alien from my comprehension, by the way; but so Davy assured us she found it necessary to abide. Of their one beautiful infant born in the old house, and the curious saintly carving about its wooden cradle. Of the young mother, too hastily weaned from luxurious calm to the struggling dream of

poverty, or at least, uncertain thrift. Of her fading, falling into a stealthy sickness, and of the night she lay (a Sunday night) and heard the organ strains swell up and melt into the moonlight from her husband's hand. Of Lenhart Davy's presence with her alone that night, unknowing, until the music-peal was over, that her soul had passed to heaven, as it were, in that cloud of music.

But I must just observe that Davy made as light as possible of his own pure and characteristic decision, developed even in boyhood. He passed over, almost without comment, the more than elder brotherly care he must have bestowed on the beautiful infant, and dwelt, as if to divert us from that point, upon the woeful cares that had pressed upon his poor friend; upon his own trouble when the young organist himself, displaced by weakness from his position, made his own end, even as Lenhart's father, an end of sorrow and of love.

Davy, indeed, merely mentioned that he had brought little Clara to England himself, and left her in London with his own mother's sister, whose house he always reckoned his asylum, if not his home. And then he told us of his promise to Clara's father that she should be brought up musically, and that no one should educate her until she should be capacitated to choose her own masters, except Davy, to whom her father had imparted a favourite system of his own.

I remember his saying, in conclusion, to my mother, "You must think it strange, dear madam, that I brought Miss Benette away from London, and alone. I could not remain in London myself, and I have known for years that her voice, in itself, would become to her more than the expected heritage. My aunt taught her only to work. This was my stipulation; and she now not only supports herself by working—for she is very independent—but is in possession of a separate fund besides, which is to carry her through a course of complete instruction elsewhere—perhaps in Italy or Germany."

I saw how much my mother felt impressed by the dignity and self-reliance that so characterised him, but I scarcely expected she would take so warm an interest in his *protégée*. She said she should like to see some of Miss Benette's work, and again I descanted on its beauties and varieties, supported by my hero, who seemed to admire it almost as much as I did.

"Then I may go and practise with Miss Benette?" I said, in conclusion.

"Oh, certainly; and you must ask her to come and see you

some evening when Mr. Davy is kind enough to drink tea with us."

That curious little Laura, too, thought I; they would not like *her* so well, I fancy. But though I do dislike her myself, I wish I could find out what they do with her.

I was going to practise the day after the next, and, methought, I will then discover.

CHAPTER XV

I TOOK a very small pot of honey for Miss Benette; Millicent had begged it for me of Lydia, who was queen-bee of the store-closet. I ran all the way as usual, and was very glad to get in. The same freshness pervaded the staircase; but, when I reached the black door, I heard two voices instead of one. I was rather put out. "Laura is there; I shall not like singing with her; it is very tiresome!" I stood still and listened; it was very lovely. How ineffable music must be to the blind! yet oh, to miss that which may be embraced by sight! I knocked, and they did not hear me; again—they both ceased singing, and Laura ran to the door. Instead of being dressed in her old clothes, she perfectly startled me by the change in her costume—a glittering change, and one from herself, for through it she appeared unearthly, and if not spiritual, something very near it. Large gauze pantaloons, drawn in at the ankles, looked like globes of air about her feet; her white silk slippers were covered with spangles; so also was her frock, and made of an illusive material like clouds; and her white sash, knotted at her side, was edged with silver fringe. Her amber necklace was no more there, but on her arms she had thick silver rings, with little clinking bells attached. She wore her hair, not in those stray ringlets, but drawn into two broad plaits, unfastened by knot or ribbon, but a silver net covered all her head behind, though it met not her forehead in front, over whose wide, but low expanse, her immense eyes opened themselves, like lustrous moons.

"Miss Lemark!" cried I, unfeignedly; "what are you going to do in that dress?"

"Come, Master Auchester, do not trouble her; she must be ready for her papa when he calls, so I have dressed her in order that she might practise with us."

"Miss Benette," I answered, "I think it is most extremely pretty, though very queer, and I did not mean to tease her. I wish you would tell me why you put it on, though?"

"To dance in," said Laura, composedly. "I am going to dance in Scheradez, or the 'Magic Pumpkin.' It is so pretty! But Miss Benette is so kind to me; she lets me have tea with her the nights I dance."

"But do you live in this house, then?"

"Oh, I wish I did! Oh, Clara, I wish I did live with you!" and she burst into a fit of her tears.

Miss Benette arose and came to her, laying down a piece of muslin she was embroidering. "Do not cry, dear; it will spoil your pretty frock; besides, Master Auchester has come on purpose to sing, and you detain him."

Laura instantly sat on a chair before the music-stand; her diaphanous skirts stood round her like the petals of a flower, and, with the tears yet undried, she began to sing, in a clear little voice, as expressionless as her eyes, but as enchanting to the full as her easy, painless movements. It was very pleasurable work now, and Clara corrected us both, she all the while sustaining a pure golden soprano.

"I am tired," suddenly said Laura.

"Then go into the other room, and rest a little. Do not ruffle your hair, which I have smoothed so nicely, and be sure not to lie down upon the bed, or you will make those light skirts as flat as pancakes."

"How am I to rest, then?"

"In the great white chair."

"But I don't want to sit still—I only mean I am tired of singing. I want to dance my *pas*."

"Then go into the other room all the same; there is no carpet—it is best."

"I don't like dancing in that room—it is so small."

"It is not smaller than this one. The fact is, you want to dance to Master Auchester."

"Yes, so I do."

"But he came to sing, not to see you."

"I should like to see her dance, though," said I. "Do let her, Miss Benette!"

"If you can stay. But do not begin the whole of that dance, Laura—only the finale, because there will not be time, and you will, besides, become too warm, if you dance from the beginning, for the cold air you must meet on your way to the theatre."

Miss Benette's solemn manner had great authority over the child, it was certain. She waited until the elder had put aside the brown table—"That you may not blow my bits of work about and tread upon them," she remarked. "Shall I sing for you, Laura?"

"Oh, please do!—pray do!—Miss Benette," I cried; "it will be so charming."

She began gravely, as in the anthem, but with the same serene and genial perfection, to give the notes of a wild measure, in triple time, though not a waltz.

Laura stood still and gazed upwards until the opening bars had sounded, then she sprang, as it were, into space, and her whole aspect altered. Her cheeks grew flushed as with a fiery impulse; her arms were stretched, as if embracing something more ethereal than her own presence; a suavity, that was almost languor, at the same time took possession of her motions. The figure was full of difficulty, the time rapid, the step absolutely twinkling. I was enraptured; I was lost in this kind of wonder—"How very strange that any one should call dancing wrong when it is like that! How extraordinary that every one does not think it lovely! How mysterious that no one should talk about her as a very great wonder! She is almost as great a wonder as Miss Benette. I should like to know whether Mr. Davy has seen her dance."

But though I called it dancing, as I supposed I must, it was totally unlike all that I had considered dancing to be. She seemed now suspended in the air, her feet flew out with the spangles like a shower of silver sparks, her arms were flung above her, and the silver bells, as she floated by me without even brushing my coat, clinked with a thrilling monotone against Clara's voice. Again she whirled backwards, and, letting her arms sink down, as if through water or some resisting medium, fell into an attitude that restored the undulating movement to her frame, while her feet again twinkled, and her eyes were raised. "Oh!" I exclaimed, "how lovely you look when you do that!" for the expression struck me suddenly. It was an illumination as from above, beyond the clouds, giving a totally different aspect from any other she had worn. But lost in her maze, she did not, I believe, hear me. She quickened and quickened her footsteps till they merely skimmed the carpet, and, with a slide upon the very air, shook the silver bells as she once more arched her arms, and made a deep and spreading reverence. Miss Benette looked up at me, and smiled.

"Now you must go; it is your time, and I want to give Laura her tea."

"I have brought you some honey, Miss Benette. Will you eat it with your bread? It is better than bonbons, Miss Laura."

"I did not care for the bonbons; I only thought you would like them. They gave them to me at rehearsal."

"Do you go to rehearsal, then, as well as the singers?"

"I go to rehearse in the ballet; and when there is no ballet, I sing in the chorus."

"But you are so little; do you always dance?"

"I am always to dance now; I did not until this season."

Her voice was dreamy and cold, the flush had already faded; she seemed not speaking with the slightest consciousness.

"Do go, Master Auchester!" and Clara looked at me from her azure eyes as kindly as if she smiled. "Do go, or she will have no tea, and will be very tired. I am so much obliged to you for the sweet, yellow honey. I shall keep it in my closet, in that pretty blue jar."

I *would* have the blue jar, though Lydia wanted me to take a white one.

"Oh, pray eat the honey, and give me the jar to fill again! I won't stay, don't be afraid, but good-night. Won't you let me shake hands with you, Miss Lemark?" for she still stood apart, like a reed in a sultry day. She looked at me directly. "Good-night, dear!" I was so inexpressibly touched by the tone, or the manner, or the mysterious something—that haunted her dancing—in *her*, that I added, "Shall I bring you some flowers next class-night?"

"If you please."

"Oh, do go, Master Auchester! I prayed you ten minutes ago."

"I am gone." And so I was, and this time I was not too late for my own tea at home.

There must be something startlingly perfect in that which returns upon the soul with a more absolute impression after its abstraction of our faculties has passed away. So completely had the fascination of those steps sufficed, that I forgot the voice of Miss Benette, resounding all the time, and only associated in my recollection the silver monotone of the clinking bells with the lulling undulation, the quivering feet. All night long, when I dreamed, it was so; and when I awoke in the morning (as usual), I thought the evening before a dream.

I dared not mention Laura to any one except Millicent, but I could not exist without some species of sympathy; and when I had finished all my tasks, I entreated her to go out with me alone. She had some purchases to make, and readily agreed. It was a great treat to me to walk with her at any time. I cannot recollect how I introduced the subject, but I managed to ask somehow, after some preamble, whether my mother thought it wrong to dance in public.

"Of course not," she replied, directly. "Some people are obliged to do so in order to live. They excel in that art as others excel in other arts, and it is a rare gift to possess the faculty to excel in that, as in all other arts."

"So, Millicent, she would not mind my knowing a dance-artist any more than any other artist?"

"Certainly it is the greatest privilege to know true artists; but there are few in the whole world. How few, then, there must be in our little corner of it!"

"You call Mr. Davy an artist, I suppose?"

"I think he pursues art as a student, who, having learned its first principles for himself, is anxious to place others in possession of them before he himself soars into its higher mysteries. So far I call him philanthropist and aspirant, but scarcely an artist yet."

"Was our conductor an artist?"

"Oh! I should think so, no doubt. Why did you ask me about artists, Charles?"

"Oh, I suppose you would not call a little girl an artist if she were as clever as possible. There is a little girl at the class who sits very near me. She is a great favourite of Miss Benette. Such a curious child, Millicent! I could not endure her till yesterday evening. She was there when I went to practise, all ready dressed for the theatre. She looked a most lovely thing—not like a person at all, but as if she could fly; and she wore such beautiful clothes!"

Millicent was evidently very much surprised.

"She lives with Miss Benette, then, Charles?"

"Oh, no; for I asked her, and she said she wished she did. I should rather think somebody or other is unkind to her, for Miss Benette seems to pity her so much. Well, I was going to tell you, Millicent, she danced. Oh, it was beyond everything. You never saw anything so exquisite. I could hardly watch her about the room; she quite swam, and turned her eyes upwards. She looked quite different from what she was at the class."

"I should think so. I have always heard that stage dancing is very fascinating, but I have never seen it, you know; and I do not think mother would like you to see her often, for she considers you too young to go to a theatre at all."

"Why should I be?"

"I don't know all her reasons, but the chief one I should suspect to be is that it does not close until very late, and that the ballet is the last thing of all in the entertainment."

"Yes, I know the ballet. Laura does dance in the ballet, she told me so. But she danced in the daylight when I saw her, so there could be no harm in it."

"No harm! there is no harm in what is beautiful; but mother likes you to be fresh for everything you do in the daytime, and that cannot be unless you sleep early, no less than well. She asked me the other day whether I did not think you looked very pale the mornings after the classes."

"Oh, what did you say?"

"I said, 'He is always pale, dear mother, but he never looks so refreshed by any sleep as when he comes down those mornings, I think.'"

"Dear Millicent! you are so kind, I shall never forget it. Now do come and call upon Miss Benette."

"My dear Charles, I have never been introduced to her."

"How formal, to be sure! She would be so glad if we went; she would love you directly—everybody does."

"I do not wish they should, Charles. You must know very well I had better keep away. I do not belong to the class, and, if she lives alone, she of course prefers not to be intruded upon by strangers."

"Of course not, generally. I am sure she ought not to live alone. She must be wanting somebody to speak to sometimes."

"You are determined she shall have you, at all events."

"Oh, no! I am nothing to her, I know; but I can sing, so she likes me to go."

"I suppose she is quite a woman, Charles!"

"Oh, yes, she is fourteen."

"My dear Charles, she cannot live alone; she is but a child, then. I thought her so much older than that."

"Oh, did not Mr. Davy say so the other night?"

"I did not notice; I do not think so."

"Oh, he told me the first time I asked him about her."

Millicent laughed again, as we went on, at the idea of her living alone. I still persisted it was a fact.

CHAPTER XVI

THE next being *our* night, after dinner the next day I went to my garden. It was growing latest autumn, but still we had had no frosts. My monthly roses were in full bloom, my fuchsias flower-laden. Then I had a geranium or two, labelled with my name, in the little greenhouse. I gathered as many as I could hold in both my hands, and carried them into the parlour.

"You have some flowers there," said Clo, with condescension.

"It is a pity to gather them when there are so few out," remarked Lydia, without lifting her eyes from her work.

I took no notice of them. Millicent beckoned me out of the parlour.

"I will give you some ribbon, Charles, if you will come to my room."

So she did; and she arranged my flowers so as to infuse into their autumnal aspect the glow of summer, so skilfully she grouped the crimson of the geraniums against the pale roses and purple stocks. I set forth, holding them in my hand. For the first time, I met Davy before I went in. He shook hands, and asked me to come to tea with him on the morrow.

Clara was there alone. She greeted me gravely, and yet I thought she would have smiled, had there not been something to make her grave.

"Miss Benette!" I whispered, but she would not answer.

Davy had just emerged below. We were making rapid progress. I always made way, not only because my ear was true, and my voice pure, but because I was sustained by the purest voice and the truest ear in the class. But now the other voices grew able to support themselves, and nothing can be imagined more perfect in its way than the communion of the parts as they exactly balanced each other; the separate voices toned down and blended into a full effect that extinguished any sensible difference between one and another.

I am very matter of fact, I know; but that is better than to be commonplace, and not the same thing, though they are often confounded. If the real be the ideal, then is the matter of fact the true. This ghost of an aphorism stalked forth from my brain, whose chambers are unfraught with book-lore as

with worldly knowledge; and to lay its phantomship, I am compelled to submit it to paper.

I could not make Clara attend to me until all was over. Then she said to me of her own accord—

“Little Laura is ill; she caught cold after she danced the other evening, and has been in bed since.”

“Will you have these flowers, then? I am afraid they are half faded, though my hand is very cold.”

“I will take them to Laura—she has no flowers.”

“I am very sorry; I hope it was not my fault. I mean, I hope it did not tire her to dance before me first.”

“Oh, no, it was her papa’s fault for letting her come into the cold air without being well wrapped up. She had a shawl to put on, and a cloak besides, of mine; but her papa gave them to somebody else.”

“How dreadfully unkind! Is it her papa who did such a thing?”

“Her own father. But look, Master Auchester, there is Mr. Davy beckoning to you. And I must go—my nurse is waiting for me.”

“So is mine, downstairs. Have you a nurse too?”

“I call her so; she came from Germany to find me, and now I take care of her.”

I was very anxious to see how Davy would address his adopted child, who numbered half his years, and I still detained her, hoping that he would join us. I was not mistaken; for Davy, smiling to himself at my obstinate disregard of his salute, stepped up through the intervening forms: “So you would not come down, Charles! I wanted to ask you to come early, as I wish to try your voice with Miss Benette’s. Come at least by five o’clock.”

He looked at Clara, and I looked at her. Without a smile upon her sweet face (but in the plenitude of that infantine gravity which so enchanted the *not* youngest part of myself), she bowed to him and answered, “If you please, sir. Then I am not to come in the morning?”

“Oh, yes, in the morning also, if you can spare time. You know why I wish to hear you sing together.”

“Yes, Sir—you told me. Good-night, Master Auchester, and Sir, to you.”

And she ran out, having replaced her black bonnet and long veil. Davy spoke a few words of gratified commendation in reference to our universal progress, and then, as the room was

nearly empty, brought me downstairs. I asked him about Laura.

"Oh! she is not dangerously ill."

"But I suppose she may be suffering," I added, in a sharp tone, for which I had been reproved times without number at home.

"Why, as to that, we must all instruct ourselves to suffer. I am very sorry for my little pupil. She has had an attack of inflammation, but is only now kept still by weakness, Miss Benette tells me."

"Miss Benette is very good to her, I think."

"Miss Benette is very good to everybody," said Davy, earnestly, with a strange, bright meaning in his accent. I looked up at him, but it was too dark to see his expressive face, for now we were in the street.

"She is good to me, but could hardly be so to you, Sir. She says you have done everything for her, and do still."

"I try to do my duty by her; but I owe to her more than I can ever repay."

How curious, to be sure! I thought, but I did not say so—there was a preventive hush in his tone and manner.

"I should so like to know what we shall sing to-morrow."

"So you shall *to-morrow*, but to-night I scarcely know myself. I will come in with you, that I may obtain your mother's permission to run away with you again. But not to another festival just yet; I could almost say, would that it were."

"I could quite, Sir."

"But we must make a musical feast ourselves, you and I."

"Oh, Sir! pray let me be a side-dish."

"That you shall be. But here we are."

Supper was spread in our parlour, and my sisters looked a perfect picture of health, comfort, and interest—three beatitudes of domestic existence. Lydia answered to the first, Clo to the second (she having fallen asleep in her chair by the charmingly brilliant fire), and dear Millicent, on our entrance, to the third; for she looked half up and glowed, the fire-light played upon her brow, but there was a gleam, more like moonlight, upon her lips as she smiled to welcome us. My mother, fresh from a doze, sympathetic with Clo, extended her hand with all her friendliness to Davy, and forced him to sit down and begin upon the plate she had filled, before she would suffer him to speak. It was too tormenting, but so it was,

that she thought proper to send me to bed after I had eaten a slice of bread and marmalade, before he had finished eating. I gave Millicent a look into her eyes, however, which I knew she understood, and I therefore kept awake, expecting her after Margareth had put out my candle. My fear was lest my mother, dear creature, should come up first, for I still slept in a corner of her room; but I knew Davy could not leave without my knowing it, as every sound passed into my brain from below. At last I listened for the steps for which I was always obliged to listen soft as her touch and gentle eyes, and I felt Millicent enter all in the dark.

"Well, Charles!" she began, as she put aside my curtain and leaned against my mattress, "it is another treat for you, though not so great a one as your first glory, and you will have to sustain your own credit rather more specially. Do you know the Priory on the Lawborough Road, not a great way from Mr. Hargreave's factory?"

"Yes, I know it; what of that?"

"The Redferns live there, and the young ladies are Mr. Davy's pupils."

"Not at the class, I suppose?"

"No; but Mr. Davy gives them singing lessons, and he says they are rather clever, though perhaps not *too* really musical. They are very fond of anything new; and now they intend to give a large musical party, as they have been present at one during a stay they made in London lately. It is to be a very select party; some amateur performers are expected, and Mr. Davy is going to sing professionally. Not only so; the young ladies' pianoforte master will be present, and most likely a truly great player, Charles—an artist—the violinist Santonio."

"Was he at the festival?"

"Oh, no: Mr. Davy says they have written to him to come from London. But now I must explain *your* part. Mr. Davy was requested to bring a vocal quartet from his class, as none of the guests can sing in parts. He is to take Miss Benette as a soprano, for he says her soprano is as superior as her lower voice."

"So it is."

"And some tenor or other."

"Mr. Newton, I dare say; he leads all the others."

"I think it was. And you, Charles, he wishes to take, for he says your alto voice is very beautiful. You will do your best, I know."

"I would do *anything* to hear a great violin player."

And full of the novel notion, I fell asleep much sooner than I did (as a child) when no excitement was before me.

CHAPTER XVII

My mother, besides being essentially an unworldly person, had, I think, given up the cherished idea of my becoming a great mercantile character, and even the expectation that I should take kindly to the prospective partnership with Fred; for certainly she allowed me to devote more time to my music tasks with Millicent than to any others. I owe a great deal to that sister of mine, and particularly the early acquaintance I made with intervals, scales, and chords. Already she had taught me to play from figured basses a little, to read elementary books, and to write upon a ruled slate simple studies in harmony.

Hardly conscious who helped me on, I was helped very far indeed. Other musicians, before whom I bow, have been guided in the first toneless symbols and effects of tone, by the hand, the voice, the brain of women; but they have generally been famous women. My sister was a quiet girl. Never mind; she had a fame of her own at last. Davy, considering I was in progress, said no more about teaching me himself, and indeed it was unnecessary. I was certainly rather surprised at my mother's permission for me to accompany him to the Redferns, first and chiefly because I had never visited any house she did not frequent herself, and she had never been even introduced to this family, though we had seen them in their large pew at church, and I was rather fond of watching them—they being about our choicest gentry. For all the while I conceived I should be a visitor, and that each of us would be on the same footing.

Had I not been going to accompany Davy, I should have become nervous at the notion of attending a great party met at a fashionable house; but as it was, it did but conceal for me a glorious unknown, and I exulted while I trembled a little at my secret heart.

But I went to my master as he had requested, and he let me into his shell. I smelt again that delicious tea, and it exhilarated me as on the first occasion. Upstairs, in the little

room, was Miss Benette. She was dressed as usual, but I thought she had never worn anything yet so becoming as that plain black silk frock. The beautiful china was upon the table, now placed for three; and child as I was, I could not but feel most exquisitely the loveliness of that simplicity which rendered so charming and so convenient the association of three ages so incongruous.

There are few girls of fourteen who are women enough to comport themselves with the inbred dignity that appertains to woman in her highest development, and there are few women who retain the perfume and essence of infancy. *These* were flung around Clara in every movement, at each smile or glance; and *those* adorned her as with regality—a regality to which one is born, not with which one has been invested. She did not make tea for Davy, nor did she interfere with his little arrangements; but she sat by me, and talked to me spontaneously, while she only spoke when he questioned, or listened while he spoke.

There was perfect serenity upon her face; yes! just the serenity of a cloudless heaven; and had I been older, I should have whispered to myself that her peace of soul was all safe, so far as he was concerned. But I did not think about it, though I might naturally have done so, for I was romantic to intensity, even as a boy.

“How is Miss Lemark?” I suddenly inquired, while Davy was in the other little room. I forgot to mention that my surmise was well founded—he *had* no servant.

“She is much better, thank you, or I should not have come here. The flowers look very fresh to-day, and she lies where she can see them.”

“When will she get up?”

“I have persuaded her to remain in bed even longer than she needs, for the moment she gets up they will make her dance, and she is not strong enough for that yet.”

Davy here returned, and we began to sing. We had a delicious hour. In that small room Clara’s voice was no more too powerfully perceptible than is the sunlight in its entrance to a tiny cell—that glory which itself is the day of heaven. She sang with the most rarefied softness, and I quite realised how infinitely she was my superior in art no less than by nature.

What we chiefly worked upon were glees, single quartet pieces, and an anthem; but last of all, Davy produced two

duets for soprano and alto; one from Purcell, the other from a very old opera, the hundred and something one of the Hamburg Kaiser, which our master had himself copied from a copy.

"Shall you sing with us in all the four-parted pieces, Sir?" I ventured to ask during the symphony of this last.

"Yes, certainly; and I shall accompany you both invariably. But of all things do not be afraid, nor trouble yourselves the least about singing in company: nothing is so easy as to sing in a high room like that of the Redferns', and nothing is so difficult as to sing in a small room like this."

"I do not find it so difficult, Sir," said Clara, gravely.

"That is because, Miss Benette, you have already had your voice under perfect control for months. You have been accustomed to practise nine hours a day without an instrument, and nothing is so self-supporting as such necessity."

"Yes, Sir, it is very good, but not so charming as to sing with your sweet piano."

"Do you really practise nine hours a day, Miss Benette?"

"Yes, Master Auchester, always; and I find it not enough."

"But do you practise without a piano?"

"Yes, it is best for me; but when I come to my lessons and hear the delightful keys, I feel as if music had come out of heaven to talk with me."

"Ah, Miss Benette!" said Davy, with a kind of exultation, "what will it be when you are singing *in* the heart of a grand orchestra!"

"I never heard one, Sir, you know; but I should think that it was like going into heaven after music and remaining there."

"But were you not at the festival, Miss Benette?"

"Oh, no."

"How very odd, when I was there!"

Davy looked suddenly at her; but though his quick, bright glance might have startled away her answer, that came as calmly as all her words, like a breeze awakening from the south.

"I did not desire to go; Mr. Davy had the kindness to propose I should, but I knew it would make me idle afterwards, and I cannot afford to waste my time. I am growing old."

"Now, Miss Benette, there is our servant or your nurse;" for I heard a knock. "Will you let me come to-morrow?"

"Just for half an hour only; because I want to sit with Laura."

"I thank you; thank you!"

"How did you get home last night?" I asked, on the promised meeting. She was sitting at the window, where the light was strongest, for her delicate work was in her hand; and as the beams of a paler sun came in upon her, I thought I had seen something like her somewhere before in a picture as it were framed in a dusky corner, but itself making for its own loveliness a shrine of light. Had I travelled among studios and galleries, I must have been struck by her likeness to those rich-hued but fairest ideals of the sacred schools of painting which have consecrated the old masters as worshippers of the highest in woman; but I had never seen anything of the kind except in cold prints. That strange reminiscence of what we never have really seen, in what we at present behold, appertains to a certain temperament only—that temperament in which the ideal notion is so definite that all the realities the least approximating thereunto strike as its semblances, and all that it finds beautiful it compares so as to combine with the beautiful itself. I do not suppose I had this consciousness that afternoon, but I perfectly remember saying, before Clara rose to welcome me as she always did, "You look exactly like a picture."

"Do I? but no people in pictures are made at work. Oh it is very unpicturesque!" and she smiled.

"I am not going to sing, Miss Benette; there is no time in just half an hour."

"I *must* practise, Master Auchester; I cannot afford to lose my half-hours and half-hours."

"But I want to ask you some questions. Now do answer me, please."

"You shall make long questions then, and I short answers."

She began to sing her florid exercises, a paper of which lay open upon the desk, in Davy's hand.

"Well, first I want to know why are they unkind to Laura, and what they do to her which is unkind?"

"It would not be unkind if Laura were altogether like her father, as she is in some respects, because then she would have no feeling; but she has the feeling of which her mother died."

"That is a longer answer than I expected, but not half enough; I want to know so much more. How pretty your hands are! so pink!" I remarked admiringly, as I watched the dimples in them, and the infantinely rounded fingers, as they spread so softly amidst the delicate cambric.

"So are yours very pretty hands, Master Auchester, and they are very white too. But never mind the hands now. I should like to tell you about Laura, because, if you become a great musician, you will, perhaps, be able to do her a kindness."

"What sort of kindness?"

"Oh, I cannot say, my thoughts do not tell me; but any kindness is great to her. She has a clever father, but he has no more heart than this needle, though he is as sharp and has as clear an eye. He made his poor little wife dance even when she was ill; but that was before I knew Laura. When I came here from London with Mr. Davy, I knew nobody; but one evening I was singing and working, while Thoné (that is my nurse) was gone out to buy me food, when I suddenly heard a great crying in the street. I went down stairs and opened the door, and there I found a little girl, with no bonnet upon her head, who wore a gay frock all covered with artificial flowers. My nurse was there too. Thoné can't talk much English, but she said to me, 'Make her speak. I found her sitting down in the gutter, all bathed in tears.'

"Then I said, in my English, 'Do tell me why you were in the streets, pretty one, and why you wear these fine clothes in the mud.'

"'Oh, I cannot dance,' she cried and sobbed; 'my feet are stiff with standing all this morning; and if I try to begin before those lamps on that slippery floor, I shall tumble down.'

"'You have run away from the theatre,' I said; and then I took her upstairs in my arms (for she was very light and small), and gave her some warm milk. Then, when she was hushed, I said, 'Were you to dance, then? It is very pretty to dance: why were you frightened?'

"'I was so tired. Oh, I wish I could go to my mamma.'

"I asked her where she was, and she began to shake her head, and to tell me her mamma was dead. But in the midst there was a great knocking at the door downstairs. Laura was dreadfully alarmed, and screamed; and while she was screaming, in came a great man—his face all bedecked with paint. I could not speak to him, he would not hear me, nor could we save the child then; for he snatched her up (all on the floor as she was), and carried her downstairs in his arms. He was very big, certainly, and had a fierce look, but did not hurt her; and as I ran after him, and Thoné after me, we saw him put her into a close coach, and get in after her, and then they

drove away. I was very miserable that night, for I could not do anything for the poor child; but I went the first thing the next morning to the theatre that had been open the evening before. Thoné was with me, and took care of me in that wild place. At last I made out who the little dancing girl was, and where she lived, and then I went to that house. Oh, Master Auchester! I thought my house so still, so happy after it. It was full of noise and smells, and had a look that makes me very low—a look of discomfort all about. I said I wanted the manager, and half a dozen smart dirty people would have shown me the way; but I said, ‘Only one, if you please.’

“Then some young man conducted me upstairs into a greasy drawing-room. Thoné did not like my staying, but I would stay, although I did not once sit down. The carpet was gay, and there were muslin curtains; but you, Master Auchester, could not have breathed there. I felt ready to cry, but that would not have helped me, so I looked at the sky out of the window till I heard someone coming in. It was the great man. He was selfish-looking and vulgar, but very polite to me, and wanted me to sit upon his sofa. ‘No,’ I said, ‘I am come to speak about the little girl who came to my house last night, and whom I was caring for when you fetched her away. And I want to know why she was so afraid to dance, and so afraid of you?’

“The man looked ready to eat me, but Thoné (who is a sort of gipsy, Master Auchester) kept him down with her grand looks, and he turned off into a laugh—‘I suppose I may do as I please with my own child!’

“‘No, Sir!’ I said, ‘not if you are an unnatural father, for in this good land the law will protect her; and if you do not promise to treat her well, I am going to the magistrate about it. I suppose she has no mother; now, I have none myself, and I never see anybody ill-treated who has no mother without trying to get them righted.’

“‘You are a fine young lady to talk to me so. Why, you are a child yourself! Who said I was unkind to my Laura? She must get her living, and she can’t do better than dance, as her mother danced before her. I will send for her, and you shall hear what she will say for herself this morning.’

“He shouted out upon the landing, and presently the child came down. I was surprised to see that she looked happy, though very tired. I said, ‘Are you better to-day?’

“ ‘ It was very nice,’ she answered, ‘ and they gave me such pretty flowers!’ ”

“ Then we talked a long time. I shall tire you, Master Auchester, if I tell you all; but I found myself not knowing what to do, for though the child had been made to go through a great deal of suffering—almost all dancers must—yet she did so love the art that it was useless to try and coax her out of her services for it. All I could do, then, was to entreat her papa not to be severe with her, if even he was obliged to be strict; and then (for he had told me she danced the night before the first time in public), I added to herself, ‘ You must try to deserve the flowers they give you, and dance your very best. And if you practise well when you are learning in the mornings, it will become so easy that you will not find it any pain at all, and very little fatigue.’ ”

“ Her papa, I could see, was not ill-humoured, but very selfish, and would make the most of his clever little daughter, so I would not stay any longer, lest he should forget what I had said. He was rather more polite again before I went away, and in a day or two I sent Thoné with a note to Laura, in which I asked her to tea—and, for a wonder, she came. I am tiring you, Master Auchester? ”

“ Oh! do please, for pity’s sake, go on, Miss Benette! ”

“ Well, when she came with Thoné, she was dressed much as she dresses at the class, and I have not been able yet to persuade her to leave off that ugly necklace. She talked to me a great deal. She was not made to suffer until after her mother’s death, for her mother was so tender of her, that she would allow no one to touch her but herself. She taught her to dance, though; and little Laura told me so innocently how she used to practise by the side of her mother’s sick-bed, for she lay ill for many months. She had caught a cold—as Laura did the other night—after a great dance, in which she grew very warm; and at last she died of consumption. She had brought her husband a good deal of money; and he determined to make the most of it as soon as she was dead—for he brought Laura on very fast by teaching her all day, and torturing her too, though I really believe he thought it was necessary.”

“ Miss Benette! ”

“ Yes: for such persons as he have not sensations fine enough to let them understand how some can be made to suffer delicately.”

" Oh! go on! "

" Well, she was just ready to be brought out in a kind of fairy ballet, in which children are required, the night the theatre opened this season. "

" And it was then she ran away? "

" Yes; when she got into the theatre, she took fright. "

" Did she dance that night, after all? "

" Oh, yes! and she liked it very much, for she is very excitable, and very fond of praise. Besides, she has a very bright soul, and she was pleased with the sparkling scenery. As she described it, ' it was all roses, and crystal, and beautiful music going round and round. ' She is a sweet little child when you really know her, and as innocent as the two little daughters of the clergyman at St. Anthony's, who go every day past hand in hand, with their white foreheads and blue eyes, and whose mamma sleeps by Laura's, in the same church-yard. Well, she came to me several times, and at last I persuaded her papa to let her drink tea with me, and it saves him trouble, so he is very glad she should. It is the end of the season now, so I hope he will give her a real holiday, and she will get quite strong. "

" He fetches her, then, to go to the theatre? "

" Yes, it is not any trouble to him, for he calls on another person in this lane, and they all go together. "

" Do you know that person? "

" Oh, no! and Laura does not like her. But as Laura is obliged to see a good deal of low people, I like her sometimes to see high people, that her higher nature may not want food. "

" I understand. Was that the reason she joined the class? "

" I persuaded her papa to allow her, by assuring him it would improve her voice for singing in the chorus; and now he comes himself, though I rather suspect it is because he likes to know all that is going on in the town. "

" She goes home with him, then? "

" Yes. The reason you saw Laura in her dancing-dress was, that you might like her. I bade her bring it, and put it on her myself. I did not tell her why, but I wished you to see her too. "

" But why did you wish me to like her, Miss Benette? "

" As I told you before—that you may be kind to her, and also that she might see some one very gentle, I wished her to be here with you. "

" Am I gentle, do you consider? "

"I think you are a young gentleman," she answered, with her sweet gravity.

"But I do not see how it could do her good exactly to see gentle persons."

"Do not you? I do; I believe she will never become ungente by living with ungente persons, as she does and must, if she once knows what gentle persons are. I may be all wrong, but this is what I believe; and when Laura grows up, I shall find out whether I am right. Oh! it is good to love the beautiful; and if we once really love it, we can surely not do harm."

"Miss Benette!" I exclaimed, suddenly—I really could not help it—"I think you are an angel."

She raised her blue eyes from the shadowy length of their lashes, and fixed them upon the dim grey autumn heaven—then without a smile—but her bright face shining even with the light of which smiles are born, she replied in the words of Mignon, but with how apart a significance! "I wish I were one!" then going on, "because then I should be all beautiful without and within me. But yet, no! I would not be an angel, for I could not then sing in our class!"

I laughed out, with the most perfect sympathy in her sentiment, and then she laughed and looked at me exactly as an infant does in mirthful play.

"Now, Miss Benette, one more question. Mr. Davy told me the other night that you had done him good. What did he mean?"

"I do not think I can tell you what I believe he meant, because you might mention it to him; and if he did not mean that, he would think me silly, and I would not seem silly to him."

"Now, do pray tell me! Do you suppose I can go home unless you will? You have made me so dreadfully curious. I should not think of telling him you had told me. Now, what did you do for him that made him say so?"

She replied, with an innocence the sister of which I have never seen through all my dreams of woman—

"Mr. Davy was so condescending as to ask me one day whether I would be his wife—some time when I am grown up. And I said, No. I think that was the good I did him."

I shall never forget the peculiar startled sensation that struck through me. I had never entertained such a notion,

or any notion of the kind about anybody; and about her it was indeed new, and to me almost an awe.

"The good you did him, Miss Benette!" I cried in such a scared tone that she dropped her work into her lap. "I should have thought it would have done him more good if you had said, Yes."

"You are very kind to think so," she replied, in a tone like a confiding child's to a superior in age—far from like an elder's to one so young as myself—"but I know better, Master Auchester. It was the only thing I could do to show my gratitude."

"Were you sorry to say, No, Miss Benette?"

"No: very glad and very pleased."

"But it is rather odd. I should have thought you would have liked to say, Yes. You do not love him, then?"

"Oh, yes, I do—well. But I do not wish to belong to him, nor to any one: only to music now; and besides, I should not have had his love. He wished to marry me that he might take care of me. But when he said so, I answered, 'Sir, I can take care of myself.'"

"But, Miss Benette, how much should one love, and how, then, if one is to marry? For I do not think all people marry for love!"

"You are not old enough to understand, and I am not old enough to tell you," she said, sweetly, with her eyes upon her work as usual, "nor do I wish to know. If some people marry not for love, what is that to me? I am not even sorry for them, not so sorry as I am for those who know not music, and whom music does not know."

"Oh! they are worse off!" I involuntarily exclaimed. "Do you think I am 'known of music,' Miss Benette?"

"I dare say: for you love it, and will serve it. I cannot tell further, I am not wise. Would you like to have your fortune told?"

"Miss Benette! what do you mean? You cannot tell fortunes!"

"But Thoné can. She is a gipsy—a real gipsy, Master Auchester, though she was naughty, and married out of her tribe."

"What tribe?"

"Hush!" said Clara, whisperingly; "she is in my other room at work, and she would be wrath if she thought I was talking about her."

"But you said she cannot speak English."

"Yes, but she always has a feeling when I am speaking about her. Such people have—their sympathies are so strong."

Now, it happened we had often talked over gipsies and their pretensions in our house, and various had been the utterances of our circle. Lydia doomed them all as impostors; my mother, who had but an ideal notion of them, considered, as many do, that they somehow pertained to Israel. Clo presumed they were Egyptian, because of their contour and their skill in pottery, though, by the way, she had never read upon the subject, as she always averred. But Millicent was sufficient for me at once, when she had said one day, "At least, they are a distinct race, and possess, in an eminent degree, the faculty of enforcing faith in the supernatural by the exercise of physical and spiritual gifts that only act upon the marvellous."

I always understood Millicent, whatever she said, and I had often talked with her about them. I rather suspect she believed them in her heart to be Chaldean. I must confess, notwithstanding, that I was rather nervous when Miss Benette announced, with such childlike assurance, her intuitive credence in their especial ability to discern and decipher destiny.

I said, "Do you think she can, then?"

"Perhaps it is vulgar to say 'tell fortunes,' but what I mean is, that she could tell, by casting her eyes over you, and looking into your eyes, and examining your brow, what kind of life you are most fit for, and what you would make out of it."

"Oh, how I should like her to tell me!"

"She shall, then, if she may come in. But your half-hour has passed."

"Oh, do just let me stay a little!"

"You shall, of course, if you please, sir; only do not feel obliged."

She arose and walked out of the room, closing the door. I could catch her tones through the wall; and she returned in less than a minute. There was something startling, almost to appal, in the countenance of the companion she ushered, coming close behind her. I can say that that countenance was all eye—a vivid and burning intelligence centred in orbs whose darkness was really light, flashing from thence over every feature. Thoné was neither a gaunt nor a great woman, though tall; her hands were beautifully small and slender, and though she was as brunette as her eye was dark, she was clear as that darkness was itself light. The white cap she wore

contrasted strangely with that rich hue, like sun-gilt bronze. She was old, but modelled like a statue, and her lips were keen, severe, and something scornful. It was amazing to me to see how Miss Benette looked and worked before this prodigy; I was speechless. Thoné took my hand in hers, and feeling I trembled, she said some quick words to Clara in a species of low German, whose accent I could not understand; and Clara replied in the same. I would have withdrawn my hand, for I was beginning to fear something dreadful in the way of an oracle, but Thoné led me with irrepressible authority to the window. Once there, she fastened upon me an almost feeding glance, and having scanned me awhile, drew out all my fingers one by one with a pressure that cracked every sinew of my hand and arm. At last she looked into my palm; but made no muttering, and did not appear trying to make out any thing but the streaks and texture of the skin. It could not have been ten minutes that had passed, when she let fall my hand, and addressing Clara in a curt, still manner, without smile or comment, uttered in a voice whose echoes haunt me still—for the words were rare as music—

“Tonkunst und Arzenei.”

I knew enough of German to interpret these, at all events, and as I stood they passed into my being by conviction, they being indeed truth.

Clara approached me. “Are you satisfied? Music *is* medicine, though, I think; do not you?”

She smiled with sweet mischief.

“Oh, Miss Benette, thank you a thousand times! for whether it is to be true or not, I think it is a very good fortune to be told. Has she told you yours?”

“Yes, often; at least as much as she told you about yourself, she has revealed to me.”

“Can she tell all people their fortunes?”

“I will ask her.”

She turned to our bright Fate and spoke. On receiving a short, low reply, as Thoné left the room, she again addressed me. “She says—‘I cannot prophesy for the pure English, if there be any, because the letters of their characters are not distinct. All I know in all, is how much there is of ours in each.’”

“I don’t know what she means.”

“No more do I.”

"Oh, Miss Benette! you do." For her arch smile fluttered over her lips.

"So I do; but, Master Auchester, it is getting very late—you must go, unless I may give you some tea. And your mother would like you to be home. Therefore go now."

I wanted to shake hands with her, but she made no show of willingness, so I did not dare, and instantly I departed. What a wonderful spell it was that bound me to the dull lane at the end of the town! Certainly it is out of English life in England one must go for the mysteries and realities of existence. I was just in time for our tea; as I walked into the parlour the fire shone, and so did the kettle, singing to itself; for in our English life we eschewed urns. Clo was reading, Lydia at the board, Millicent was cutting great slices of home-made bread. I thought to myself, "How differently we all manage here. If Millicent did but dare, I know she would behave and talk like Miss Benette."

"How is the young lady this afternoon, Charles? I wish you to ask her to come and drink tea with us on Sunday after service."

"Yes, mother; is Mr. Davy coming?"

"He promised the other night."

"And Charles," added Clo, "do not forget that you must go with me to-morrow and be measured for a jacket."

"I am to wear one at last, then?"

"Yes, for now you are really growing too tall for frocks."

I was very glad, for I abjured those braided garments, compassing about my very heels with bondage, with utter satisfaction. Still, I was amused. "I suppose it is for this party I am going to," thought I.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE next day at class, Laura's place still being empty, I watched eagerly for Clara. The people were pouring in at the door, and I, knowing their faces, could not but feel how unlike she was to them all, when in the way she appeared, so bright in her dark dress, with her cloudless forehead and air of ecstatic innocence. She spoke to me to-day.

"How are you?"

"Quite well; and you, Miss Benette? But I want you to listen to me presently; seriously, I have something to say."

"I'll wait"—and she took her seat.

Davy extolled our anthem, and did not stop us once, which fact was unprecedented. We all applauded *him* when he praised *us*, at which he laughed, but was evidently much pleased. In fact, he had already made for himself a name and fame in the town, and the antagonistic jealousy of the resident professors could not cope therewith, without being worsted; they had given him up, and now let him alone—thus his sensitive nature was less attacked, and his energy had livelier play. When the class divided, Miss Benette looked round at me: "I am at your service, Master Auchester."

I gave her my mother's message. She was sweet and calm as ever, but still grave, and she said, "I am very grateful to your mother, and to those young ladies, your sisters; but I never do go anywhere out to tea."

"But, Miss Benette, you are going to that party at the Red-ferns."

"I am going to sing there; that is different. It is very hard to me not to come, but I must not, because I have laid it upon myself to do nothing but study until I come out. Because, you see, if I make friends now, I might lose them then, for they might not like to know me."

"Miss Benette!"—I stamped my foot—"how dare you say so? We should always be proud to know you."

"I cannot tell that," she retorted; "it might be, or it might not. Perhaps you will think I am right one day. I should like to have come," she persisted bewitchingly; but I was inwardly hurt, and I dare say she thought me outwardly sulky, for it was all I could do to wish her good-evening like a "young gentleman," as she had called me.

I said to Millicent, when we were walking the next morning, that I had had my fortune told. We had a long conversation. I saw she was very anxious to disabuse me of the belief that I must necessarily be what, in myself, I had always held myself ready to become; and I laughed her quite to scorn.

"But, Charles," she remonstrated, "if this is to be, you must be educated with a direct view to those purposes."

"So I shall be; but when she said medicine she did not mean I should be an apothecary, Millicent;" and I laughed the more.

"No, I rather think it is music you ought to profess. But in that case you will require high as well as profound instruction."

"I mean to profess an instrument, and I mean to go to Germany and learn all about it."

"My dear boy!"

"Yes, I do, and I know I shall; but as I have not chosen my instrument yet, I shall wait."

Millicent herself laughed heartily at this. "Would you like to learn the horn, Charles? or the flute? or perhaps that new instrument, the ophicleide?" And so the subject dwindled into a joke for that while. I then told her in strict confidence about Laura. I scarcely ever saw her so much excited to interest; she evidently almost thought Clara herself angelic, and to my delight she at length promised to call with me upon her, if I would ascertain that it would be convenient. I shall never forget, too, that Millicent begged for me from my mother some baked apples, some delicate spiced jelly, and some of her privately concocted lozenges—for Laura. I do think my mother would have liked to dispense these last *à la largesse* among the populace. I carried these treasures in a small basket to Miss Benette, and saw her just long enough to receive her assurance that she should be so pleased if my sister would come and look at her work.

Sweet child! as indeed she was by the right of Genius—(who, if Eros be immortal youth, hath alone immortal fancy)—she had laid every piece of her beauteous work, every scrap of net or cambric, down to that very last handkerchief, upon the table, which she had covered with a crimson shawl, doubtless some relic of her luxurious mother conserved for her. And with the instinct of that ideal she certainly created in her life, she had interspersed the lovely manufactures with little bunches of wild flowers and green, and a few berries of the wild rose tree, ripe and red.

I was enchanted; I was proud beyond measure to introduce to her my sister; proud of them both. Millicent was astonished—amazed; I could see she was quite puzzled with pleasure, but more than all she seemed lost in watching Clara's calm, cloudless face.

"Which of the pieces do you like best?" asked Miss Benette at last, after we had fully examined all.

"Oh, it is really impossible to say; but if I could prefer I should confess, perhaps, that this is the most exquisitely imagined;" and Millicent pointed to a veil of thin white net, with the border worked in the most delicate shades of green floss silk, a perfect wreath of myrtle leaves; and the white

flowers seemed to tremble amidst that shadowy garland. I never saw anything to approach them; they were far more natural than any paintings.

Miss Benette took this veil up in her little pink hands, and folding it very small, and wrapping it in silver paper, presented it to Millicent, saying, in a child-like but most touching manner, "You must take it, then, that you may not think I am ungrateful; and I am so glad you chose that."

As Millicent said, it would have been impossible to have refused her anything. I quite longed to cry, and the tears stood in my tender-hearted sister's eyes; but Clara seemed entirely unconscious she had done anything touching, or pretty, or complete.

If I go on in this way, raking the embers of reminiscence into rosy flames, I shall never emancipate myself into the second great phase of my existence. It is positively necessary that I should not revert to that veil at present, or I should have to delineate astonishment and admiration that had no end.

CHAPTER XIX

At last the day came, and, having excited myself the whole morning about the Redferns, I left off thinking of them, and returned to myself. Although it portends little, I may transmit to posterity the fact, that my new clothes came home at half-past three, and my mother beheld me arrayed in them at five. Davy had all our parts, and the songs of Miss Benette, for she was to sing alone if requested to do so, and was to be ready when I should call, to accompany me.

I was at length pronounced at liberty to depart; that is, everybody had examined me from head to foot. I had a sprig of the largest myrtle in the greenhouse quilted into the second and third button-holes, and my white gloves were placed in my pocket by Clo, after she had wrapped them in white paper. I privately carried a sprig of myrtle, too, for Miss Benette; it was covered with blossom, and of a very fine species. Thoné never answered the door in St. Anthony's lane, but invariably the same extraordinary figure who had startled me on my first visit. She stared so long with the door in her hand, this time, that I rushed past her, and ran up the stairs.

Still singing! Yes, there she was, in her little bonnet, but,

from head to foot, enveloped in a monstrous cloak; I could not see what dress she wore. It was November now, and getting very dusk, but we had both expressed a wish to walk, and Davy always preferred it. How curious his shell looked in the uncertain gleam! The tiny garden, as immaculate as ever, wore the paler shine of asters and Michaelmas daisies; and the casement above, being open, revealed Davy watching for us through the twilight. He came down instantly, sweeping the flower-shrubs with his little cloak, and, having locked the door, and put the key into his pocket, he accosted us joyously, shaking hands with us both. But he held all the music under his cloak, too, nor would I proceed until he suffered me to carry it. We called for Mr. Newton, our companion tenor, who lived a short way in the town. He met us with white gloves ready put on, and in the bravery of a white waistcoat, which he exhibited through the opening of his jauntily hung great coat. I left him behind with Davy, and again found myself with Miss Benette. I began to grow nervous, when, having passed the shops and factories of that district, we emerged upon the Lawborough Road, lit by a lamp placed here and there, with dark night looming in the distant highway. Again we passed house after house standing back in masses of black evergreen, but about not a few there was silence and no light from within. At length, forewarned by rolling wheels that had left us far behind them, we entered the gate of the Priory, and walked up to the door.

It was a very large house, and one of the carriages had just driven off as Davy announced his name. One of three footmen, lolling in the portico, aroused and led us to a room at the side of the hall, shutting us in. It was a handsome room, though small, furnished with a looking-glass; here were also various coats and hats reposing upon chairs. I looked at myself in the glass while Davy and our tenor gave themselves the last touch, and then left it clear for them. I perceived that Miss Benette had not come in with us, or had stayed behind. She had taken off her bonnet elsewhere, and when we were all ready, and the door was opened, I saw her once more, standing underneath the lamp. I could not find out how she was dressed; her frock was, as usual, black silk, but of the very richest. She wore long sleeves, and drooping falls upon her wrists of the finest black lace; no white against her delicate throat, except that in front she had placed a small but really magnificent row of pearls. Her silky dark hair she

wore, as usual, slightly drooped on either temple, but neither curled nor banded. I presented her with the myrtle sprig, which she twisted into her pearls, seeming pleased with it; but otherwise she was very unexcited, though very bright. I was not bright, but very much excited; I quite shook as we walked up the soft stair carpet side by side. She looked at me in evident surprise.

"You need not be nervous, Master Auchester, I assure you!"

"It is going into the drawing-room, and being introduced, I hate; will there be many people, do you think?"

She opened her blue eyes very wide when I asked her, and then, with a smile quite new to me upon her face, a most enchanting but sorely contemptuous smile, she said—

"Oh, we are not going in there—did you think so? There is a separate room for us, in which we are to sip our coffee."

I was truly astonished, but I had not time to frame any expression—we were ushered forward into the room she had suggested. It was a sort of inner drawing-room apparently, for there were closed folding-doors in the wall that opposed the entrance. An elegant chandelier hung over a central rose-wood table; on this table lay abundance of music, evidently sorted with some care. Two tall wax candles upon the mantel-shelf were reflected in a tall mirror, in tall silver sticks; the gold-coloured walls were pictureless, and crimson damask was draped and festooned at the shuttered window. Crimson silk chairs stood about, and so did the people in the room, whom we began, Clara and I, to scrutinise. Standing at the table by Davy, and pointing with a white kid finger to the music thereon arranged, was an individual with the organs of melody and of benevolence in about equal development; he was talking very fast. I was sure I knew his face; and so I did. It was the very Mr. Westley who came upon us in the corridor at the festival. He taught the younger Miss Redferns, of whom there was a swarm; and as they grew they were passed up to the tuition of Monsieur Mirandos, a haughtily-behaved being, in the middle of the rug, warming his hands, gloves and all, and gazing with the self-consciousness of pianist primo, then and there present. It was Clara who initiated me into this fact, and also that he taught the competent elders of that exclusively feminine flock, and that he was the author of a grand fantasia which had neither predecessor nor descendant. Miss Benette and I had taken two chairs in the

corner next the crimson curtain, and nestling in there we laughed and we talked.

"Who is the man in a blue coat with bright buttons, now looking up at the chandelier?" I inquired.

"That is a man who has given his name an Italian termination, but I forget it. He has a great name for getting up concerts, and I dare say will be a sort of director to-night."

So it was, at least so it seemed, for he at last left the room, and returning presented us each with a sheet of pink-satin notepaper, on which were named and written in order the compositions awaiting interpretation. We looked eagerly to see where our first glee came.

"Oh, not for a good while, Master Auchester; but do look! here is that Mirandos going to play his '*grande Fantasia sur des Motifs Militaires*.' Oh! who is that coming in?"

Here Miss Benette interrupted herself, and I, excited by her accent, looked up simultaneously.

As for me, I knew directly who it was, for the gentleman entering at the door so carelessly, at the same time appearing to take in the whole room with his glance, had a violin-case in his hand. I shall not forget his manner of being immediately at home, nodding to one and another amiably, but with a slight sneer upon his lip, which he probably could not help, as his mouth was very finely cut. I felt certain it was Santonio; and while the gentleman upon the rug addressed him very excitedly, and received a cool reply, though I could not hear what it was, for all the men were talking, Davy came up to us and confirmed my presentiment.

"What a handsome gentleman he is! but how he stares," said Clara, in a serious manner, that set me laughing; and then Davy whispered, "Hush!"

But it was of little use, for Santonio came up now to our corner, and deposited his case on the next chair to Miss Benette, looking at her all the while and at me, so that we could well see his face. It was certainly very handsome, a trifle too handsome, perhaps, yet full of harmonious lines, and the features were very pure. His complexion was glowing, yet fair, and passed well by contrast into the hue of his eyes, which were of that musical grey more blue than slate-coloured. Had he been less handsome, the Hebrew contour might have been more easily detected; as it was, it was clear to me, but might not have occurred to others who did not look for it. A brilliant person, such as I have seldom seen, he yet interested

more by his gestures, his way of scanning, and smiling to himself, his defiant self-composure, something discomposing to those about him, than by his positive personal attractions. Having examined us, he examined also Davy, and said specially, "How are you?"

"Quite well, thank you," replied our master; "I had no right to expect you would remember me, Mr. Santonio."

"Oh! I never forget anybody," was the reply; "I often wish I did, for I have seen everybody now, and there is no one else to see."

"Oh!" thought I to myself, but I said nothing, "you have not seen *one*." For I felt sure, I knew not why, that he had not.

"Is this your son, Davy?" questioned he, once more speaking, and looking down upon me for an instant.

"Certainly not; my pupil and favourite alto."

"Is he for the profession, then?"

"What do you say, Charles?"

"Yes, Mr. Davy, certainly."

"If I don't mistake, it will not be alto long, though," said Santonio, with lightness; "his arm and hand are ready made for me."

I was so transported that I believe I should have knelt before Santonio, but that, as lightly as he had spoken, he had turned again away. It was as if he had not said those words, so unaltered was his face with those curved eyebrows; and I wished he had left me alone altogether, I felt so insignificant. It was a good thing for me that now there entered footmen very stately, with silver trays, upon which they carried coffee, very strong and cold, and chilly green tea. We helped ourselves, every one, and then it was I really began to enjoy the exclusion with which we had been visited; for we all seemed shut in and belonging to each other. The pianist primo joked with Santonio, and Mr. Westley attacked Davy; while Newton and the man in the blue coat with bright buttons wore the subject of the festival to a thread; for the former had been away, and the latter had been there; and the latter enlightened the former, and more than enlightened him, and where his memory failed, invented; never knowing that I, who had been present, was listening and judging: as Clara said, "he was making up stories"—and indeed it was a surprise for me to discover such an imagination dwelling in a frame so adipose.

Santonio at last attracted our whole attention by pouring his coffee into the fire, and asking a footman, who had re-entered with wafers and tea-cakes, for some more coffee that was hot; and while we were all laughing very loud, another footman, a shade more pompous than this, threw back the folding-doors that divided us from the impenetrable saloon. As those doors stood open we peeped in.

"How many people there are!" said I.

"Yes," said Clara, "but they are not very wise."

"Why do you suppose not?"

"First, because they have set the piano close up against the wall. Mr. Davy will have it out, I know."

"I see a great many young ladies in pink frocks, I suppose the Miss Redferns."

"See that man, Master Auchester, who is looking down at the legs of the piano, to find out how they are put on."

And thus we talked and laughed until Santonio had finished his coffee, quite as if no one was either in that room or in the next.

"It was not warm, after all," said he to Mirandos; but this was in a lower tone, and he put on an air of hauteur withal, that became him wonderfully. Then I found that we had all become very quiet, and there had grown a hush through the next room, so that it looked like a vast picture, of chandeliers all light, tall glasses, ruddy curtains, and people gaily yet lightly dressed. The men in there spoiled the picture though—they none of them looked comfortable; men seldom do in England at an evening party. Our set, indeed, looked comfortable enough, though Davy was a little pale; I very well knew why. At last in came the footman again; he spoke to the gentleman in the blue coat with bright buttons. *He* bowed, looked red, and walked up to Davy. Miss Benette's song came first, I knew; and I declare the blood quite burned at my heart with feeling for her. How little I knew her really! Almost before I could look for her, she was gone from my side; I watched her into the next room. She walked across it just as she was used to cross her own little lonely room at home, except that she just touched Davy's arm. As she had predicted, he drew the piano several feet from the wall—it was a grand piano—and she took her place by him. As serenely, as seriously, with that bright light upon her face which was as the sunshine amidst those lamps, she seemed, and I believe was, as serene, as serious, as when at home over her exquisite

broidery. No music was before Davy as he commenced the opening symphony of one of Weber's most delighting airs. The public was just fresh from the pathos of Weber's early death, and everybody rushed to hear his music. She began with an intensity that astonished even me—an ease that so completely instilled the meaning, that I ceased to be alarmed or to tremble for her. Her voice even then held promise of what it has since become, as perfectly as does the rose-bud, half open, contain the rose. I have seen singers smile while they sang, I have watched them sing with the tears upon their cheeks, yet I never saw any one sing so seriously as Miss Benette; calmly, because it is her nature, and, above all, with an evident facility so peculiar, that I have ceased to reverence conquered difficulties so much as I believe I ought to do for the sake of art. Everybody was very quiet, quieter than at many public concerts; but this audience was half stupefied with curiosity, as well as replete with the novelty of the style itself. Everybody who has enthusiasm knows the effect of candle-light upon the brain during the performance of music anywhere, and just as we were situated there was a strange romance I thought. Santonio stood upon the rug, a very sweet expression sat upon his lips; I thought even *he* was enchanted; and when Clara was silent and had come back again so quietly, without any flush upon her face, I thought he would surely come too and compliment her. But no, he was to play himself, and had taken out his violin.

It was a little violin, and he lifted it as if it had been a flower or an infant, and laid his head lovingly upon it while he touched the strings. They, even those pizzicato hints, seemed to me to be sounds borne out of another sphere, so painfully susceptible I became instantly to the power of the instrument itself.

“It is to be the Grand Sonata, I see.”

“No, Sir,” said Davy, who had come back with Miss Benette.

“Yes; but I shall not play with Mirandos; we settled that—Miss Lawrence and I.”

“Who is Miss Lawrence?”

“An ally of mine.”

“In the room?”

“Yes, yes; don't talk, Davy! she is coming after me. Your servant, Miss Lawrence!”—

I beheld a young lady in the doorway.

"So, Mr. Santonio, you are not ready? They are all very impatient for a sight of you."

"I am entirely at your service."

"Come, then."

She beckoned with her hand. It was all so sudden that I could only determine the colour of her hair, black; and of her brocaded dress, a dark blue. Her voice was in tone satirical, and she spoke like one accustomed to be obeyed. When Santonio entered there began a buzzing, and various worthies in white kid gloves clustered round the piano. He drew the desk this side of the instrument, so that not only his back was turned to us, but he screened Miss Lawrence also; and I was provoked that I could see nothing but the pearls that were twisted with her braided hair. It was one of Beethoven's complete works to be interpreted, a divine duo for violin and piano, that had then never been heard in England, except at the Philharmonic concerts, and I did not know the name even then of the Philharmonic. And when it began, an indescribable sensation of awe, of bliss, of almost anguish, pervaded me; it was the very bitter of enjoyment, but I could not realise for a long time.

The perfection of Santonio's bowing never tempted him to eccentricity, and no one could have dreamed of comparing him with Paganini, so his fame was safe. But I knew nothing of Paganini, and merely felt from head to foot as if I were the violin and he was playing upon me, so completely was I drawn into the performance, body and soul. Not the performance merely, let me say; as a violinist now, my conviction is that the influence is as much physical as supernatural of my adopted instrument. That time my nerves were so much affected that I trembled in every part of me. Internally I was weeping, but my tears overflowed not my eyes.

Santonio's cantabile, whatever they say of Ernst or of Sivori, is superior to either. There is a manly passion in his playing that never condescends to coquette with the submissive strings; it wailed enough that night for anything, and yet never degenerated into imitation. I knew directly I heard him draw the first quickening, shivering chord—shivering to my heart—I knew that the violin must become my master, or I its own.

Davy, still pale, but radiant with sympathetic pleasure, continued to glance down upon me, and Clara's eyes were lost in drooping to the ground. I scarcely know how it was, but I was very inadvertent of the pianoforte part, magnificently sustained

as it was and inseparable from the other, until Clara whispered to Davy, "Does she not play remarkably well, Sir?"

"Yes," he returned; "I am surprised. She surely must be professional." But none of us liked to inquire, at least then.

I noticed afterwards, from time to time, how well the piano met the violin in divided passages, and how exactly they went together; but still those strings, that bow, were all in all for me; and Santonio was the scarcely perceptible presence of an intimate sympathy, veiled from me, as it were, by a hovering mist of sound. So it was especially in the slow movement, with its long sighs, like the voice of silence, and its short, broken sobs of joy. The thrill of my brain, the deep tumult of my bosom, alone prevented me from tears, just as the rain falls not when the wind is swelling highest, but waits for the subsiding hush. The analogy will not serve me out, nevertheless; for at the close of the last movement, so breathless and so impetuous as it was, there was no hush, only a great din, in the midst of which I wept not, it was neither time nor place. Miss Benette, too, whispered just at the conclusion, when Santonio was haughtily, and Miss Lawrence carelessly, retiring—"Now we shall go; but please do not make me laugh, Master Auchester."

"How can you say so, when it was your fault that we laughed the other night?"

And truly it did seem impossible to unsettle that sweet gravity of hers, though it often unsettled mine.

CHAPTER XX

WE went, and really I found it not so dreadful; and so was I drawn to listen for her voice—so dear to me even then, that I forgot all other circumstances except that she was standing by me there, singing. I sang very well, to my shame if it be spoken, I always know when I do, and the light colour so seldom seen on Davy's cheek attested his satisfaction. Davy himself sang alone next, and we were cleared off every one, while he sang so beautiful a bass solo, in its delicacy and simplicity, as I had ever heard. Clara and I mutually agreed to be very nervous for our master. I am sure he was so, but nobody could have told it of him who did not know him inside and out. Not even Santonio, who, standing on the rug again, and turning

down his wristbands which had disappeared altogether while he played, said to Mirandos, "He seems very comfortable," meaning Davy. Then came a quartet, and we figured again.

I was not glad to feel the intermitting tenor supplant that soprano. Truly, it seemed that the higher Clara sang the nearer she got to heaven. The company applauded this quartet, mere thready tissue of sweet sounds as it was—Rossini's—more than even Santonio's violin; but twenty years ago there had been no universal deluge of education, as I have lived to see since, and, at least in England, in the midland counties, people were few who could make out the signs of musical genius, so as to read them as they ran. Perhaps it was better that the musician then only sought for sympathy among his own kind.

I knew Mirandos, and his fantasia came next, and hastily retreated, pulling Miss Benette by her dress to bring her away too; for I had a horror of his spreading hands. Santonio, impelled I dare say by the small curiosity which characterises great minds in the majority of instances, came on the contrary forwards, and stood in the doorway to watch Mirandos take his seat. I could see the sneer settle upon his lips, subtle as that was, and I should have liked to stand and watch him; for I am fond of watching the countenances of artists in their medium moments, when I saw that Miss Benette had stolen to the fire, and was leaning against the mantel-shelf her infantine forehead. Her attraction was strongest; I joined her.

"Now," said I; "if it were not for Santonio, would you not find this evening very dull?"

"It is not an evening at all, Master Auchester, it is a candle-light day, and so far from finding it dull, I find it a great deal too bright. I could listen for ever to Mr. Davy's voice."

"What can it be that makes his voice so sweet, when it is such a deep voice?"

"I know it is because he has never sung in theatres. It does make a deep voice rough to sing in theatres, unless a man does not begin to sing so for a long, very long time."

"Miss Benette, is that the reason you do not mean to sing in theatres?"

"No; but it is the reason I sing so much in my little room."

"Mr. Davy says you don't mean to act."

"No more I do mean, but perhaps it will come upon me, and Thoné says, 'Child, you must.'"

"She thinks you have a special gift, then?"

"Who said to you about the special gift, Master Auchester? Do you ever forget anything you hear?"

"Never! I am like Mr. Santonio. But Mr. Davy told me the night I asked him your name."

"Oh yes, I told him I had not a special gift. I thought the words so put together would please him, and I like to please him; he is good. I do not think it is a special gift you know, Master Auchester, to act."

"What is it then, Miss Benette?"

"An inspiration."

"Mr. Davy called the conducting at the festival inspiration."

"Oh, yes, but all great composers are inspired."

"Do you consider our conductor was a great composer?"

"I dare say. But you must not ask me, I am not wise. Thoné is very wise, and she said to me the other day, after you were gone, 'He is one of us.'"

"But, Miss Benette, she is a gipsy, and I am not."

"We are not all alike because we are one. Can there be music without many combinations, and they each of many single sounds?"

Mirandos was putting on the pedal, and we paused at this moment, as he paused before the attacca. Santonio still remained in the doorway, and Davy was standing in the window against the crimson curtain, listening, and quite white with distress at the performance; for the keys every now and then jangled furiously, and a storm of arpeggi seemed to endanger the very existence of the fragile wires.

Suddenly a young lady swept past Santonio, and glanced at Davy in passing into our retreat. Santonio, of course, did not move an inch; certainly there was just room to clear him! but Davy fell back into the folds of the curtain, frowning, not at the young lady, but at the fantasia.

It was Miss Lawrence; and lo! before I could well recognise her, she stepped up to me and said, without a bow or any introductory flourish, "Are you Mr. Davy's pupil?"

"We are both, ma'am," I answered foolishly, half indicating Miss Benette, who was bending her lashes into the firelight. Miss Lawrence replied lightly, yet seriously—

"Oh, I know *she* is, but you first, because I knew you again."

I gazed upon her at this crisis. She had a peculiar face, dark, yet soft; and her eye was very fine, large, and half closed, but not at all languid. Her forehead spread wide beneath

jetty hair as smooth as glass, and her mouth was very satirical; capable of sweetness as such mouths alone are, though the case is often reversed. How satirical are some expressions that slumber in sweetness too exquisite to gaze on! And as for this young lady's manner, very easy was she, yet so high as to be unapproachable, unless she first approached you. Her accent was polished, or her address would have been somewhat brusque; as it was, it only required, not requested, a reply. She went on all this time, though—"I saw you in the chorus at the festival, and I watched you well; and I saw you run out, and return with that water-glass I envied you in bearing. I hope you thought yourself enviable?"

"I certainly did not, because I could not think of myself at all."

"That is best! now will you, that is, can you tell me who the conductor was?"

I forgot who she was, and imploringly my whole heart said, "Oh, do pray tell us! we have tried and tried to find out, and no one knows."

"No one knows! but I *will* know!" and she shook impatiently the rich coral negligée that hung about her throat—again, with much bitterness in her tones, she resumed—"I think it was cruel and unjust besides not to tell us, that we at least might have thanked him. Even poor St. Michel was groaning over his ignorance of such a personage, if indeed he be a wight and not a sprite. I shall find a witch next."

"Thoné!" I whispered to Clara, and her lips parted to smile, but she looked not up.

And now a young man came in, out of the company, to look for Miss Lawrence.

"Oh, is Miss Lawrence here?" said Santonio, carelessly turning and looking over his shoulder to find her, though I dare say he knew she was there well enough. However, he came up now and took his stand by her side, and they soon began to talk. Rather relieved that the responsibility was taken off myself, I listened eagerly.

It was fascinating in the extreme to me to see how Miss Lawrence spurned the arm of the gentleman who had come to look for her, and to conduct her back; he was obliged to retire discomfited, and Santonio took no heed of him at all. I could not help thinking then that Miss Lawrence must have been everywhere, and have seen everything, to be so self-possessed, for I could quite distinguish between her self-possession and

Clara's; the latter natural, the former acquired, however naturally worn.

It was not long, nevertheless, before I received a shock. It was something in this way. Miss Lawrence had reverted to the festival, and she said to Santonio, "I had hopes of this young gentleman, because I thought he belonged to the conductor, who spoke to him between the parts; but he is as wise as the rest of us, and I can only say my conviction bids fair to become my faith."

"Your conviction that you related to me in such a romantic narrative?" asked Santonio, without appearing much interested. But he warmed as he proceeded. "The wind was very poor at the festival, I heard."

"They always say so in London about county performances, you know, either at least about the wind or the strings, or else one luckless oboe is held up to ridicule, or a solitary flute, or a desolate double-bass."

"But if the solitary flute or bass render themselves absurd, they should be ridiculed far more in a general orchestra than in a particular quartet or so, for the effect of the master-players thus goes for nothing. I never yet heard a stringed force go through an oratorio, and its violent exercises for the tutti, without falling at least a tone."

"Oh, the primi were very well! and, in fact, had all been flat together, it would have been unnoticeable; while the tempi were marked so clearly, no one had time to criticise and analyse. But the organ had better have been quiet altogether; it would have looked very well, and nobody would have known it was not sounding."

"I beg your pardon, every one would then have called out for more noise."

"Not so, Mr. Santonio; there was quite body enough. But there sat Erfurt, groping, as he always does, for the pedals, and punching the keys, while the stops, all out, could very often not be got in, in time, and we had fortissimo against the fiddles."

"I wonder your conductor did not give one little tap upon Erfurt's skull. So much for his own judgment, Miss Lawrence."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Santonio; the grand point was making all go together, such as it was, so that no one realised a discrepancy anywhere. Interruptions would not only have been useless, they would have been ignorant; but in this

person's strange intimacy with the exigencies of a somewhat unsteady orchestra, his consummate triumph was achieved."

"Well, I believe he will be found some time hence, in some out-of-the-way hole, that shall deprive you all of enchantment."

"I do believe he is my wizard of Rothseneld."

"You are very credulous if you can so believe."

And they said much more. But what shocked me, had been the denuding treatment of my all-glorious festival—my romance of perfectibility, my ideal world. How they talked—for I cannot remember the phrases they strung into cold chains, at much greater length than I record—of what had been for me as heaven outspread above in mystery and beauty, and as a heaven-imaging deep beneath, beyond my fathom, yet whereon I had exulted as on the infinite unknown! they making it instead, a reality not itself all lovely—a revelation not itself complete. I had not been mixed in the musical world—for there is such a world as is not heaven, but earth in the realm of tone, and tone-artists must pass, as it were, through it. How few receive not from it some touch, some taint of its clinging presence! How few, indeed, infuse into it—while in it they are necessitated to linger—the spirit of their heavenly home! Dimly, of a truth, had the life of music been then opened to my ken; but it seemed at that moment again enclosed, and I fell back into the first darkness. It was so sad to me to feel thus, that I could not for an instant recover my faith in myself. I fancied myself too insignificantly affected, and would, if I could, have joined in the anti-spiritual prate of Miss Lawrence and Santonio. Let me do them no injustice; they were both musicians, but I was not old enough to appreciate their actual enthusiasm, as it were, by mutual consent, a sealed subject between them.

I am almost tempted, after all, to say that it is best not to tamper with our finest feelings—best to keep silence; but let me beware—it is while we muse, the fire kindles, and we are then to speak with our tongues. Let *them* be touched too, though, with the inward fire, or we have no right to speak.

CHAPTER XXI

Oh, shame upon me, thus to ramble, when I should be restoring merely!

After the shock I mentioned, the best thing happened to me possible—we had to sing again; and Clara's voice arising, like the souls of flowers, to the sun, became actually to me as the sun unto those flowery souls. I revived and recovered my warmth; but now the reaction had come, and I sang through tears. I don't know how my voice sounded, but I felt it return upon me, and Davy grew rather nervous, I knew, from his manner of accompanying. And I did not say that while Miss Lawrence had stood and chatted with Santonio, a noiseless *rentrée* of footmen had taken place—they bearing salvers loaded with ices, and what are called creams, at evening parties.

A sort of interlude this formed, of which the guests availed themselves to come and stare in upon us; and as they looked in we peeped out, though nobody ventured on our side beyond the doorway. So our duet had happened afterwards, and the music was to be resumed until twelve o'clock, the supper-hour. And after our duet there was performed this coda that Miss Redfern requested Miss Lawrence to play with her, and that Miss Lawrence refused, but consented, at Santonio's suggestion, to play alone. As soon as she was seen past our folding-door, the whole male squadron advanced to escort her to the piano; but, as she was removing her gloves leisurely, she waved them off, and they became of no account whatever in an instant. She sat down very still and played a brilliant prelude, a more than brilliant fugue, short and sharp, then a popular air, with variations, few, but finely fingered; and at last, after a few modulations, startling from the hand of a female, something altogether new, something fresh and mystical, that affected me painfully even at its opening notes. It was a movement of such intense meaning, that it was but one sigh of unblended and unfaltering melody, isolated as the fragrance of a single flower, and only the perfumes of nature exhale a bliss as sweet, how far more unexpressed! This short movement, that in its oneness was complete, grew, as it were, by fragmentary harmonies intricate, but most gradual, into another; a *prestissimo*, so delicately fitted that it was like

moonlight dancing upon crested ripples; or for a better similitude, like quivering sprays in a summer wind. And in less than fifty bars of regularly broken time—how ravishingly sweet I say not—the first subject in refrain flowed through the second, and they interwoven even as creepers and flowers densely tangled, closed together simultaneously. The perfect command Miss Lawrence possessed over the instrument did not in the least occur to me; I was possessed but by one idea. Yet too nervous to venture into that large room, I eagerly watched her, and endeavoured to arrest her eye, that I might beckon her among us again; so resolute was I to ask her the name of the author. Santonio, as if really excited, had made a sort of rush to her, and was now addressing her, but I heard not what they said, though Davy did, for he had followed Santonio. To my surprise, I saw that Miss Benette had taken herself into a corner, and when I gazed upon her she was wiping her eyes. I was reminded then that my own were running over.

Scarcely was I fit to look up again, having retreated to another corner, when I beheld Miss Lawrence in her blue brocade, come in and look about her. She absolutely advanced to me.

"Did you like that little dream? That is my notion of the gentleman at the festival, do you know."

"Did you compose it?" I asked in a maze.

"No, I believe he did."

"Then you know who he is; tell me; oh! tell me the name."

She smiled then at me with kindness, a beneficent sweetness.

"Come, sit down, and I will sit by you and tell you the story."

"May not Miss Benette come too?"

"Oh, certainly, if she is not more comfortable out there. I wish you would bring her though, for I want to see her eyes." I slipped over the carpet, "Come Miss Benette, and hear what Miss Lawrence is saying." She looked a little more serious with surprise, but followed me across the room and took the next chair beyond mine. Santonio came up too, but Miss Lawrence said, "Go—you have heard it before;" and he having to play again next, retired with careful dignity.

"You must know that once on a time, which means about three months ago," began Miss Lawrence, as if she were reading the introductory chapter of a new novel, "I wanted some country air and some hard practice. I cannot get either in

London where I live; and I determined to combine the two. So I took a cottage in a lone part of Scotland—mountainous Scotland; but no one went with me except my maid, and we took care together of a grand pianoforte which I hired in Edinburgh, and carried on with me, van and all.

“It was glorious weather just then, and when I arrived at my cottage I found it very difficult to practise, though very charming to play; and I played a great deal, often all the day until the evening, when I invariably ascended my nearest hill, and inhaled the purest air in the whole world. My maid went always with me, and at such seasons I left my pianoforte sometimes shut and sometimes open, as it happened, in my parlour, which had a splendid prospect, and very wide windows opening to the garden in front. I allowed these windows to remain open always when I went out, and I have often found Beethoven’s sonatas strewed over the lawn when the wind blew freshly, as very frequently it did. You may believe I often prolonged my strolls until the sun had set and the moon arisen. So one time it happened, I had been at work the whole day upon a crabbed copy of studies by Bach and Handel, that my music-seller had smuggled for me from an old bureau in a Parisian warehouse. For you must know such studies are rarely to be found.”

“Why not?” asked I rather abruptly, just as if it had been Millicent who was speaking.

“Oh, just because they are rare practice, I suppose. But listen, or our tale will be cut off short, as I see Santonio is about to play.”

“Oh, make haste then, pray!”

And she resumed in a vein more lively.

“The whole day I had worked, and at evening I went out. The sunshine had broken from dark moist clouds all over those hills. The first steep I climbed was profusely covered with honeysuckle, and the rosy gold of the clusters, intermixed with the heather, just there a perfect surface, pleased me so much that I gathered more than I could well hold in both my arms. Victorine was just coming out—that is, my handmaid—and I returned past her to leave my flowers at home. It struck me first to throw them over the palings upon the little lawn, but second thoughts determined me to carry them in-doors for a sketch or something. I got into my parlour by the glass door, and flung them all, fresh as they were, and glimmering with rain-drops, upon the music-stand of the pianoforte. I cannot

tell you why I did it, but so it was; and I had a fancy that they would be choice companions for those quaint studies which yet lay open upon the desk.

“In that lone place, such was its beauty and its virtue, we never feared to leave the windows open or the doors all night unlocked; and I think it very possible I may have left the little gate of the front garden swinging after me; for Victorine always latched it, as she came last.

“At all events, I found her on the top of the honeysuckle height, carrying a camp-stool and looking very tired. The camp-stool was for her, as I always reposed on the grass, wrapped in a veritable tartan. And this night I reposed a good deal to make a flying sunset sketch. Then I stayed to find fault with my dry earth and wooden sky, and the heather with neither gold nor bloom upon it; then to watch the shadows creep up the hill, and then the moon, and then the lights in the valley, till it was just nine o'clock. Slowly strolling home I met nobody, except a shadow—that is to say, as I was moving no faster myself than a snail, I suddenly saw a long figure upon the ground flit by me in the broad moonlight.

“‘It was a gentleman in a cloak,’ said Victorine, but I had seen no person, only, as I have said, a shadow, and took no note.

“‘He had a sketching-book like Mademoiselle’s, and was pale,’ added Victorine; but I bade her be silent, as she was too fond of talking; still I replied, ‘Everybody looks pale by moonlight;’—a fact to be ascertained, if anywhere, on a moonlit moor.

“So I came home across the lawn, and got in at my window. I rang for candles: it was not dark, certainly; but I wanted to play. I stood at the window till the good wife of the house, from her little kitchen, brought them up. She placed them upon the piano, as I had always ordered her to do, and left the room. After I had watched the moonlight out of doors for some time, being lazy with that wild air, I walked absently up to the instrument. What had taken place there? Behold the Bach and Handel discarded, lay behind the desk, having been removed by some careful hand, and on the desk itself, still overhung with the honeysuckle and heather I had hastily tossed about it, I found a sheet of music paper. I could not believe my eyes for a long time. It was covered with close delicate composition, so small as to fill a double page, and

distinct as any printing. It had this inscription, but no name, no notice else: 'Heather and Honeysuckle, a Tone-wreath from the Northern Hills.' "

"And that is what you played; oh, Miss Lawrence!" I cried, less in ecstasy at the sum of the story than at my own consciousness of having anticipated its conclusion.

"Yes, that is what I played, and what I very seldom do play; but I thought you should hear it!"

"I!" I cried, much too loud under the circumstances; but I could not have helped it. "It was very kind of you, but I don't know why you should; but it is by *him* then?"

"You have said!" answered Miss Lawrence, laughing; "at least I think so. And if you and I agree, no doubt we are right."

"No, I don't see that at all," I replied; for it was a thing I could not allow. "I am only a little boy, and you are a great player, and grown up. Besides, you saw his shadow."

"Do you think so? Well, I thought so myself, though it may possibly have been the shadow of somebody else."

Miss Lawrence here stopped that she might laugh, and as she laughed her deep eyes woke up and shone like fire-flies glancing to and fro. Very Spanish she seemed then, and very Jewish withal. I had never seen a Spaniard I suppose then, but I conceive I had met with prints of Murillo's "Flower-girl;" for her eyes were the only things I could think of while Miss Lawrence laughed.

"At all events," she at last continued, "the Tone-wreath is no shadow." I was astonished here to perceive that Clara had raised her eyes; indeed, they looked fully into those of the speaker.

"He came from Germany, you can be sure at least."

"Why so, Miss Benette?" replied Miss Lawrence, graciously, but with a slight deference, very touching from one so self-sustained.

"Because it is only in that land they call music Tone."

"But still he may have visited Germany and have listened to the Tongedicht of Beethoven; for *he* is not so long dead." And she sighed so deeply that I felt a deep passion indeed must have exhaled that sigh. I got out of my chair, and ran to Lenhart Davy, for I saw him yet in the curtain. He detained me, saying, "My dear little boy, do stay by me and sit awhile, that you may grow calm; for verily, Charles, your

eyes are dancing almost out of your head. Besides, I should like you to *see* Mr. Santonio while he plays."

"Will he turn his face this way, though, Mr. Davy? for he did not before."

"I particularly requested him to do so, and he agreed, on purpose that you might look at him." In fact, Santonio had taken up the gilt music-stand, and very coolly turned it towards us, in the very centre of the company, who shrank with awe from his immediate presence, and left a circle round him. Then, as Mirandos, who had to play a trifling negative accompaniment to the stringed solo, advanced to the piano, the lord of the violin turned round and nodded at me, as he himself took his seat.

CHAPTER XXII

WE—that is, Miss Benette, and Davy and I—came away from the Redferns all in a hurry, just before supper; Santonio having informed us that he intended to stay. He, indeed, if I recollect right, took Miss Lawrence down, and I have a dim remembrance of Mirandos poking haughtily in the background. Also I remember our conversation on returning home, and that Davy informed us Miss Lawrence was immensely rich. She had lost her mother when a baby, he said; but I thought her very far from pitiable—she seemed to do so exactly as she pleased. I had no idea of her age, and I did not think about it at all; but Miss Benette said, "She is as independent as she is gifted, Sir; and she spoke to me like one who is very generous."

"Yes, I should think so," said Davy, cheerfully; "Santonio tells me she is a pupil of Milans-André."

"Oh!" I cried, "how I wish I had known that."

"Why so, my dear boy?"

"Because I would have asked her what he is like; I do so want to know."

"She does not admire him so wonderfully, Santonio says; and soon tired of his instructions. I suppose the fact is she can get on very well alone."

"But I wish I had asked her, Sir," I again said, "because we should be quite sure about the conductor."

"But you forget Miss Lawrence was at the festival, Charles

and that she saw you there. Come! my boy, you are not vain."

"No, Sir, I don't think I am. Oh! Miss Benette, you laughed!"

"Yes, Master Auchester, because you could be no more vain than I am."

"Why not, Miss Benette?"

"Because we could neither of us be vain, side by side with our Tone-Master," she answered with such a childlike single-heartedness, that I was obliged to look at Davy to see how he bore it. It was very nearly dark, yet I could make out the lines of a smile upon his face.

"I am very proud to be called so, Miss Benette; but it is only a name in my case, with which I am well pleased my pupils should amuse themselves."

"Master Auchester!" exclaimed Miss Benette, without replying to Davy at all, "you can ask Miss Lawrence about Mons. Milans-André, if you please, for she is coming to see my work, and I think it will be to-morrow that she will come."

"Oh, thank you, Miss Benette! I suppose Miss Lawrence said that to you when Mr. Davy called me away to him?"

"I did not call you, Charles; you came yourself."

"But you kept me, Sir"—and it struck me on the instant that Davy's delicate device ought to have been touched upon, so I felt awkward and kept silence.

I was left at home first, and promised Clara I would come, should my mother and the weather agree to permit me. I was hurried to bed by Clo, who had sat up to receive me. I was disappointed at not seeing Millicent, with the unreasonableness which is exclusively fraternal; but Clo informed me that my mother would not permit her to stay out of bed.

"And Charles, you must not say one word to-night, but eat this slice of bacon and this egg directly, and let me take off your comforter."

The idea of eating eggs and bacon! I managed the egg, but it was all I could do, and then she presented me with a cup of hot barley-water. Oh! have you ever tasted barley-water with a squeeze of lemon juice, after listening to the violin? I drank it off, and was just about to make a rush at the door, when Clo stopped me.

"My dear Charles! Margareth is gone up to bed, stay until I can light you with my candle. And come into my room to

undress, that you may not wake my mother by throwing your brush down."

I was marched off impotent, she preceding me upstairs with a stately step. But softly as we passed along, Millicent heard us; she just opened a little bit of her door, and stooped to kiss me in her white dressing-gown. "I have chosen my instrument," I said in a whisper, and she smiled. "Ah, Charles!"

I need not recapitulate my harangue the next morning when I came down late, and found only Millicent left to make my breakfast. I was expected to be idle, and the rest had gone out to walk. But I wondered, when I came to think, that I had been so careless as to omit asking Clara the hour fixed for Miss Lawrence's visit; though, perhaps, was my after-thought, she did not know herself. I need not have feared though; for while I was lying about on the sofa after our dinner, having been informed that I must do so, or I should not practise in the evening, in came Margareth with a little white note directed to "Master Charles Auchester."

"I am sure, Master Charles," said she, "you ought to show it to my mistress, for the person that brought it was no servant in any family hereabouts, and looks more like a gipsy than anything else."

"Well, and so it is a gipsy, Margareth. Of course I shall tell my mother—I know all about it."

Margareth wanted to know, I was sure, but I did not enlighten her further; besides, I was in too great a hurry to break the seal—a quaint little impression of an eagle carrying in his beak an oak-branch. The note was written in a hand full of character, yet so orderly it made me feel ashamed. It was as follows:

"DEAR SIR,—The young lady is here, and I said you wished to come. She has no objection, and will stay to see you.

"CLARA BENETTE."

How like her! I thought; and then with an unpardonable impulse—I don't defend myself in the least—I flew out of the house as if my shoes had been made of satin. I left the note open upon the table—it was in the empty breakfast-room where I had been lolling—meaning thereby to save my credit; like a simpleton as I was, for it contained not one word of explanation.

A carriage was at the door of that corner house in St. Anthony's Lane, a dark-green carriage; very handsome, very

plain, with a pair of beautiful horses; the coachman, evidently tired of waiting, was just going to turn their heads.

When I got into the room upstairs, or rather while yet upon the stairs, I smelt some refined sort of foreign scent I had once before met with in my experience—namely, when my mother had received a present of an Indian shawl in an Indian box, from an uncle of her's who had gone out to India, and laid his bones there. When I really entered, Miss Lawrence, in a chair by the table, was examining some fresh specimens of Miss Benette's work, outspread upon the crimson as before. I abruptly wished Clara good-day, and immediately her visitor held out her hand to me. This lady made me feel queer by daylight; I could not realise, scarcely recognise her. She looked not so brilliant, and now I found that she was slightly sallow; her countenance might have been called heavy from its peculiar style; still, I admired her eyes, though I discerned no more fire-flies in her glance. She was dressed in a great shawl—red I think it was—with a black bonnet and feather; and her gloves were so loose, they seemed as if they would fall off: she had an air of even more fashionable ease than ever, and I, not knowing that it *was* fashionable ease, felt so abashed under its influence, that I could not hold up my head.

She went on talking about the work; I found she wished to purchase some; but Clara would not part with any of that which was upon the table, because it was for the Quakers in Albemarle Square. But she was very willing to work specially for Miss Lawrence. I thought I had never seen Clara so calm; I wondered she could be so calm; at once she seemed to me like myself—a child, so awfully grown up did Miss Lawrence appear. I beheld, too, that the latter lady glanced often stealthily round and round the room, and I did not like her the better for it. I thought she was curious, and very fine besides; so the idea of asking her about Milans-André passed out of my brain completely.

She had, as I said, been discussing the work—she gave orders for embroidered handkerchiefs, and was very particular about the flowers to be worked upon them; and she gave orders for a muslin apron, to be surrounded with vandykes, and to have vandyked pockets—for a toilette cushion and a veil—and then she said, "Will you have the goodness to send them to the Priory when they are finished? My friends live there, and will send them on to me. I wish to pay for them now"—and she laid a purse upon the table.

"I think there is too much gold here, ma'am," said Clara, innocently.

"I know precisely the cost of work, Miss Benette—such work as yours is, besides, priceless. Recollect, you find my materials. That is sufficient, if you please." And to my astonishment, and rather dread, she turned full upon me as I was standing at the table.

"You wish to know what Milans-André is like, Master Charles Auchester: for that is your name, I find. Well, thus much: he is not like you, and he is not like Santonio, nor like the unknown conductor, nor like your favourite, Mr. Davy. He is narrow at the shoulders, with long arms, small white hands, and a handsome face—rather too large for his body. He plays wonderfully, and fills a large theatre with one piano-forte. He is very amiable, but not kind; and very famous, but not beloved."

What an extraordinary description! I thought; and I involuntarily added, "I thought he was your master."

She seemed touched, and answered generously, "I am afraid you think me ungrateful, but I owe nothing to him. Ah! you owe far more to your master, Mr. Davy."

I was pleased, and replied, "Oh! I know that, but I should like to hear Milans-André play."

"You will be sure to hear him. He will, ere long, become common, and play everywhere. But if I had a piano here, I could show you exactly how he plays, and could play you a piece of his music."

I thought it certainly a strange mistake in punctilio for Miss Lawrence to refer to the want of a piano in that room, but I little knew her. She paused, too, as she said it, and looked at Clara. Clara did not blush, nor did her sweet face change.

"I am very sorry that I have no piano. I am to have one some day, when I grow rich; but Mr. Davy is kind enough to teach me at his house, and I sing to his piano there. I wish I had one, though, that you might play, Miss Lawrence."

The fire-flies all at once sparkled, almost dazzled, from the eyes of Miss Lawrence: a sudden glow, which was less colour than light, beamed all over her face. I could tell she was enchanted about something or other—at least, she looked so.

"Oh! Miss Benette," she answered, in a genial tone, "you are very, very rich with such a voice as yours, and such power to make it perfect as you possess."

Clara smiled: "Thank you for saying so." Miss Lawrence

had risen to go, yet she still detained herself, as having something left to do or say.

"I should like to see you both again, and to hear you. You, Miss Benette, I am sure of, but I also expect to discover something very wonderful about Master Charles Auchester. You are to be a singer, of course?" she quickly said to me.

"I hope I shall be a player, if I am to be anything."

"What! another Santonio? or another Milans-André?"

"Oh! neither; but I must learn the violin."

"Oh! is that it? Have you begun, and how long?"

"Not yet, I have no violin; but I mean to begin very soon."

"Only determine, and you will. Farewell!"

She had passed out, leaving a purse upon the table, containing fifty guineas. Miss Benette opened it, turned out the coins one by one, and, full of trouble, said, "Oh! whatever shall I do? I shall be so unhappy to keep it."

"But that is wrong, Miss Benette, because you deserve it. She is quite right."

"No, but I will keep it, because she is generous, and I can see how she loves to give."

CHAPTER XXIII

LAURA was at the next class. I had almost forgotten her until I saw her eyes. I felt quite wicked when I perceived how thin and transparent the child had grown—wicked, to have thought so little of her in suffering, while I had been enjoying myself. I cannot give the least idea how large her eyes looked—they quite frightened me. I was not used to see persons just out of illness. Her hair, too, was cut much shorter, and, altogether, I did not admire her so much. I felt myself again wicked for this very reason, and was quite unhappy about it. She gave me a nod. Her cheeks were quite pale, and usually they were very pink; this also affected me deeply. Clara appeared to counter-charm me, and I saw no other immediately.

"Ah, Laura, dear! you are looking quite nice again, so pretty," said this sweet girl, as she took her seat; and then she stooped down and kissed the little dancer.

I found myself rather in the way: for to Clara it seemed quite natural to scatter happiness with her very looks. She turned to me, after whispering with Laura:

"She wants to thank you for the flowers, but she does not like to speak to you."

I was positively ashamed, and, to hide my confusion, said to Laura, "Do you like violets?"

"Yes, but I like large flowers better. I like red roses and blue cornflowers."

I did not care for cornflowers myself, except among the corn; and I thought it very likely Laura took the poppies for roses; still I did not set her right—it was too much trouble. But if I had known I should never see her again—I mean, see her as she then was—I should have taken more care to do her kindness. Is it not ever so? Clara entirely engaged me; in fact, I was getting quite used *not* to do without her. How well I remember that evening: we sang a service. Davy had written several very simple ones, and I longed to perform them in public—that is to say, in the singing gallery of our church. But I might as well have aspired to sing them up in heaven, so utterly would they have been spurned as innovatory.

It was this evening I felt for the first time what I suppose all boys feel at one time or another—that they cannot remain always just as they are. It was no satiety, it was no disappointed hope, nor any vague desire. It was purely a conviction that some change was awaiting me. I suppose, in fact, it was a presentiment. The voices of our choir seemed thin, and far away; the pale cheek of Lenhart Davy seemed stamped with unearthly lustre; the room and roof were wider, higher; the evening colours, clustered in the shape of windows, wooed to that distant sky. I was agitated—ecstatic. I could not sing; and when I listened I was bewildered in more than usual excitement. Snatches of hymns and ancient psalms, morsels of the Bible, lullabies and bells, speeches of no significance, uttered years and, as it seemed, centuries ago—floated into my brain and through it, despite the present, and made there a murmurous clamour, like the din of a mighty city wafted to the ear of one who stands on a commanding hill. I mention this to prove that presentiment is not a fatuity, but something mysterious in its actuality; like love, like joy; perhaps a passion of memory, that anticipates its treasures and delights *to be*.

"What beautiful words!" said Clara, in a whisper that seemed to have more sweetness than other whispers, just as some shadows have more symmetry than other shadows. She meant, "Unto whom I swear in my wrath," and the rest.

"Yes," I answered, "I like those words, all of them, and the way they are put. I always liked them when I was a little boy."

It was very hard to Miss Benette not to reply here, I could tell, she so entirely agreed with me; but Davy was recalling our attention. When the class was over, she resumed—

"I know exactly what you mean; for I used to feel it at the old church in London, where I went with Mr. Davy's aunt, and could not see above the pew—it was so high."

"Did you like her, Miss Benette? Is she like him?"

"No, not much. She is a good deal stricter, but she is exceedingly good; taller than he is, with much darker eyes. She taught me so much, and was so kind to me, that I only wonder I did not love her a great deal more."

I felt rather aghast, for, to tell the truth, I only wonder when I love; never when I am indifferent as to most persons. As we were going out, I asked leave to come and practise on the morrow, I felt I *must* come. I wonder what I should have done had she refused me! "Certainly, Master Auchester." But she was looking after Laura. "Let me pin up that shawl, dear, and tie my veil upon your bonnet; mind, you wear it down in the street." The child certainly seemed to have put on her clothes in a dream: for her great shawl trailed a yard behind her on the floor, and did not cover her shoulders at all. Her bonnet-strings, now very disorderly indeed, were entangled in a knot, which Clara patiently endeavoured to divide. I waited as long as I dared, but Davy was staying for me I knew, and at last he waved his hand. I could no longer avoid seeing him, and said to Clara, "Good-night." She smiled, but did not rise; she was kneeling before Laura. "Good-night, Miss Lemark."

She only looked up. The large eyes seemed like the drops of rain after a drenching shower within the chalice of some wood anemone—too heavy for the fragile face in which they were set, and from which they gazed as if unconscious of gazing. I thought to myself, as I went out, she will die, I suppose; but I did not tell Davy so, because of his reply when I had first spoken of Laura's illness. I felt very dispirited though, and shrank from the notion, though it still obtruded itself. Davy was very quiet. I recollect it to have been a white foggy night, and more keen than cold; perhaps that was the reason, as he was never strong in health. When I came to our door—how well I remember it!—I pulled him in upon the mat before he well knew what I was about.

"Oh! Master Charles," exclaimed Margareth, who was exclusive portress in our select establishment, "your brother has brought you a parcel—a present, no doubt."

"Oh! my goodness; where is Fred?"

"They are all in the parlour. But, Sir, won't you walk in?"

"I beg your pardon," said Davy, absently; "oh! no. I am going back. Good-night, Charles."

"Oh! dear, Mr. Davy, do stay and see my present, please."

Davy did not answer here, for the parlour door opened, and my mother appeared—benign and hospitable.

"Come in, come in!" she said, extending her hand, and I, at least, was in before she was out of the parlour. Fred was there, and Fred's wife—a pretty black-haired little matron, full of trivialities, and full of sympathy with Lydia—was sitting by that respected sister at a little table. I ran to shake hands with Mrs. Fred, and knocked over the table. Alas! they were making bead purses, and for a few moments there was a restoration of chaos among their elements. Clo came from a dark corner, where she was wide awake over Dean Prideaux, and my mother had raised her hands in some dismay, when I was caught up by Fred, and lifted high into the air.

"Well, and what do I hear," etc.

"Oh! Fred, where is my present?"

"Present, indeed! Such as it is, it lies out there. *Nobody* left it at the office, so Vincent tells me; but I found it there among the packages, and was strongly inclined to consider it a mistake altogether. Certainly 'Charles Auchester, Esq.' was not 'known there;' but I smelt plum-cake, and that decided me to have it opened here."

I rushed to the chair behind the sofa, while the rest—except Millicent and Mr. Davy, who were addressing each other in the low voice which is the test of all human proprieties—were scolding in various styles. The fracas was no more to me than the jingling of the maternal keys. I found a large oblong parcel rolled in the thickest of brown papers, and tied with the thickest of strings round and round again so firmly, that it was, or appeared to be, hopeless to open it, unless I gnawed that cord.

"Oh! Lydia, lend me your scissors."

"For shame, Charles," pronounced Clo. "How often have I bidden you never to waste a piece of string."

She absolutely began upon those knots with her fingers. My own trembled so violently that they were useless. Meanwhile, for she was about ten minutes engaged in the neat

operation, I scanned the address. It was as Fred had mentioned to me, as an adult and as an esquire, and the writing was bold, black, and backward. It seemed to have come a long way, and smelt of travelling; also, when the paper was at length unfolded, it smelt of tow, and something oblong was muffled in the tow.

"A box!" observed sapient Clotilda. I tore the tow out in handfuls. "Don't strew it upon the carpet, oh! my dearest Charles!" Clo, I defy you! It was a box truly, but what sort of box? It had a lid and a handle. It was also fastened with little hooks of brass. It was open, I don't know how. There it lay—there lay a real violin in the velvet lining of its varnished case!

No, I could not bear it. It was of no use to try. I did not touch it, nor examine it. I flew away upstairs. I shut myself into the first room I came to, which happened to be Lydia's; but I did not care. I rushed up to the window, and pressed my face against the cold glass. I sobbed; my head beat like a heart in my brain; I wept rivers. I don't suppose the same thing ever happened to any one else. Therefore, none can sympathise. It was mystery, it was passion, it was infinitude; it was to a soul like mine a romance so deep, that it has never needed other. My violin was mine, and I was it; and the beauty of my romance was, in truth, an ideal charmer: for be it remembered that I knew no more how to handle it than I should have known how to conduct at the festival.

The first restoring fact I experienced was the thin yet rich vibration of that very violin. I heard its voice—somebody was trying it—Davy no doubt; and that marvellous quality of tone which I name a double oneness—resulting, no doubt, from the so often treated harmonics—reached and pierced me up the staircase, and through the closed door. I could not endure to go down, and presently when I had begun to feel rather ghostly—for it was dead-dark—I heard somebody come up and grope first here, then there, overhead and about, to find me. But I would not be found until all the places had been searched where I did not happen to be hidden. Then the person came to my door. It was Millicent; she drew me into the passage.

"Oh! I can't go down."

"Darling! do, for my sake. They are all so pleased. Mr. Davy has been playing, and he says it is a real Amati."

"But don't let Fred touch it, please, Millicent!" For I

had a vague idea it would not like to be touched by Fred.

"Why, no one *can* touch it but Mr. Davy. Not even *you*, Charles. Do come downstairs now and look at it."

I went. Mr. Davy was holding it yet, but the instant I entered he advanced and placed it between my arms. I embraced it, much as young ladies embrace their first wax dolls, but with emotions as sweet, as deep, as mystical, as those of the youth who first presses to his soul the breathing presence of his earliest love. I saw then that this violin was a tiny thing—a very fairy of a fiddle; it was certainly not new, but I did not know how very old it was, and should not have been the least aware how valuable it was, and of what a precious costliness, but for Davy's observation, "Take care of it, Charles, and it will make you all you wish to be. I rather suspect Santonio will envy you its possession when he has tried it."

"But is he to try it, then, Mr. Davy?"

"Your mother has given me leave to ask him, if I see him; but I fear he has already returned to London." Davy glanced here at my mother with a peculiar expression, and resumed—"I am going to write to him, at all events, about another subject, or rather upon the same subject."

"Oh, Mr. Davy! I will talk to my little boy myself."

"Certainly, Madam; I will not anticipate you."

"Charles, dear," said Clo, "you must have your supper now."

It appeared to me that I had already had it, but I restored my doll to its cradle in silence, and ate unconsciously. Fred's presence at the board stimulated his lady and Lydia to extreme festivity, and they laughed the whole time; but Millicent was pale and Davy quiet, and he departed as soon as he possibly might. But a smile of sweetness all his own, and of significance sweeter than sweetness, brightened his frank adieu for me into the day-spring of my decided destiny.

PART II—THE VIOLIN AND THE VIOLET

CHAPTER XXIV

THE next morning my mother redeemed her promise. It was directly after breakfast when she had placed herself in the chair at the parlour window. She made no allusion to the evening before, until she completed this arrangement of hers, and then she looked so serious as I stood before her, that I fully expected something I should not like.

"Charles," she said, "you are very dear to me, and perhaps you have given me more care than all my children, though you are the youngest. I have often wondered what you would be or become as a member of society, and it was the last of all my thoughts for you that you must leave me to be educated. But if you are to be a musician, you must be taken from me soon, or you will never grow into what we should both of us desire—a first-rate artist. I could not wish you to be anything less than first-rate, and now you are very backward."

"Am I to go to London, then, mother?" I shook in every limb.

"I believe a first-rate musical education for you in London would be beyond my means. It is upon this subject your friend Mr. Davy is to be so good as to write to Santonio, who can tell us all about Germany, where higher advantages can be obtained more easily than anywhere in England. But, Charles, you will have to give up a great deal if you go; and learn to do everything for yourself. If you are ill, you will have to do without nursing and petting as you would have here; and if you are unhappy, you must not complain away from home. Also you must work hard, or you will lose your free self-approval, and be miserable at the end. I should be afraid to let you go if I did not know you are musical enough to do your duty by music, and loving enough to do your duty by your mother; also, that you are a true boy, and will not take to false persons. But it is hard to part with you, my child; and, indeed, we need not think of that just yet."

I did though, I am ashamed to say; and I wanted to set off on the next day. I knew this to be impossible, and the fact

that consoled me was the very one of my unstrung ignorance, for I had a vague impression that Davy would tune me up before I left home. I could not see him that morning—my excitement was intense—I could not even cut a caper, for I had to do my lessons, and Clo always behaved about my lessons as if they were to go on for ever, and I was by no means to grow any older. She was especially stationary on this morning, and I had nothing for it but to apply very hard indeed. My copy was more crabbed than ever; but while she commented so gravely thereupon, I thought of what Santonio had said about my arm and hand. I was not vain, I have not a tincture of vanity all through me; but I was very proud, and also most demurely humble.

At dinner, Millicent talked to me of my prospects, but I pretended not to admit them in all their magnificence; the prophetic longing was so painful to me, that I dared not irritate it. So she rallied me in vain, and I ate a great deal of rice-pudding to simulate occupation. Dinner over, they all retired to their rooms; I to my violin in a corner of the parlour. I hung over it as it lay in its case; I fed upon it in spirit; but I did not take it out, I was afraid of any one coming in. At last, I spread my pocket-handkerchief upon the case, and sitting down upon it, went to sleep in scarcely conscious possession. I did not dream anything particular, though I suppose I ought to have done so, and it had been better for these unilluminated pages; but when I awoke it was late, that is, late for my engagement with Miss Benette.

I ran all the way; and as I reached my resting-place, it occurred to me that I should have to tell her I was going to Germany. How glad she would be, and yet a little sorry; for I had an idea she liked me, or I should never have gone near her. Vaulting into the passage, I heard strange sounds. Singing—but not only singing. More and more wonders! I thought, and I dashed upstairs. The sounds ceased when I knocked at the door, which Clara came to open. I gazed in first, before I even noticed her, and beheld in the centre of the room a small polished pianoforte. I flew in, and up to it, and breathlessly surveyed it.

“Miss Benette, where did that come from? I thought you were not to have a pianoforte for ever so long.”

She came to me, and replied with her steady, sweet voice, a little agitated—

“Oh! Master Auchester, I wish you could tell me who it

came from, that I might give that person my heart quite full of thanks. I can only believe it comes from some one who loves music more than all things—some one rich, whom music has made richer than could all money. It is such a sweet, darling, beautiful thing, to come to me! such a precious glory to make my heart so bright!”

The tears filled her eyes, and looking at her, I perceived that she had lately wept—the veins of harebell-blue seemed to quiver round the lids.

“Oh, Miss Benette! I had a violin sent to me too, and I thought it was from Mr. Davy, but now I feel quite sure it was from that lady.”

Clara could scarcely speak, I had never seen her so overcome, but she presently answered—

“I believe it was the young lady. I hope so, because I should like her to be made happy by remembering we have both got through her what we wanted more than anything in the world. She would not like to be thanked, though; so we ought not to grieve that we cannot express our gratitude.”

“I should like to know really, though; because it seems so strange she should recollect *me*.”

“Oh, Master Auchester, no! Any one can see the music in your face, who has the music in his heart. Besides, she saw you at the festival, and how anxious you were to serve the great gentleman.”

“Now, Miss Benette, I am to tell you something.”

“How good! do go on.”

I laid my arm on the piano, but scarcely knew how to begin.

“What is it to do, then?” asked Clara, winningly.

“I am going really to be a musician, Miss Benette. I am going to Germany.”

She did not reply at first; but when I looked up, it was as though she had not wept, so bright she beamed.

“That’s all right; I knew you would. Oh! if she knew how much good she had done, how happy she would be! How happy she will be when she goes to a concert some day, in some year to come, and sees you stand up, and hears you praise music in the voice it loves best!”

“Do you think so? Do you think it is the best voice of music?”

“Because it is like the voice of a single soul, I do. But Mr. Davy says we cannot know the power of an orchestra of souls.”

“I can.”

"Oh! I beg your pardon! I forgot."

"But I don't think that I remember well; for whenever I try to think of it, I seem only to see his face, and hear his voice speaking to me, and saying, 'Above all, the little ones!'"

"How pretty it was! You will be sure to see him in Germany, and then you can ask him whether he wrote the 'Tone-Wreath.'"

Oh, how I laughed again!

"What sort of place shall I go to, should you think?"

"I don't know any place, really, Master Auchester. I can't tell what places they have to learn at, upon the Continent. I know no places besides this house, and Mr. Davy's, and the class, and church, and Miss Lenhart's house in London."

"Are you not very dull?"

Alas! for the excitable nature of my own temperament! I was sure I should be dull in her place, though I had never felt it until my violin came upon me, stealthy and stirring, as first love. She looked at me with serene wonder.

"I don't know what dull means. I do not want anything I have not got, because I shall have everything I want, some day, I mean; and I would rather not have all at once."

I did not think anything could be wanting to her, indeed, in loveliness or aspiration, for my religious belief was in both for her; still I fancied it impossible she should not sometimes feel impatient, and especially as those blue shadows I have mentioned had softened the sweetness of her eyes, and the sensation of tears stole over me as I gazed upon her.

"We shall not practise much, I am afraid, Master Auchester, for I want to talk, and I am so silly, that when I sing, I begin to cry."

"For pleasure, I suppose. I always do."

"Not all for pleasure. I am vexed, and I do not love myself for being vexed. Laura is going to Paris, Master Auchester, to study under a certain master there. Her papa is going too; and that woman I do not like. She is unhappy to leave me, but they have filled her head with pictures, and she is wild for the big theatres. She came to see me this morning, and I talked to her a long time. It was that made me cry."

"Why, particularly?"

"Because I told her so many things about the sort of people she will see, and how to know what is beautiful in people who are not wise. She promised to come and live with me when I have been to Italy, and become a singer; but till then, I

shall, perhaps, never meet her; for our ways are not the same. She looked with her clear eyes right through me, to see if I was grave; and if she only finds her art is fair, I shall not be afraid of her."

"But is she not ill? I never saw anybody look so strange."

"That is because her hair is shorter. You do not like her, Master Auchester?"

I shook my shoulders. "No; not a great deal."

"You will try, please. She will be an *artist*."

"But don't you consider—of course I don't know—but don't you consider dancing the lowest art?"

"Oh, Master Auchester! all the arts help each other, and are all in themselves so pure, that we cannot say one is purer than the other. Besides; was it not in the dream of that Jew, in the Bible, that the angels descended as well as ascended?"

"You are like Martin Luther."

"Why so?"

"Clo—that is my clever sister—told me what he said about the arts and religion."

"Oh, Mr. Davy tells that story."

"Miss Benette, you are very naughty! You seem to know everything that everybody says."

"No,—it is because I see so few people, that I remember all they say."

"Are you not at *all* fonder of music than of dancing? Oh, Miss Benette!"

She laughed heartily, showing one or two of her twinkling teeth.

"I am fonder of music than of anything that lives or is, or rather I am not fond of it at all; but it is my life, though I am only a young child in that life at present. But I am rather fond of dancing, I must confess."

"I think it is charming; and I can dance very well, particularly on the top of a wall. But I do not care about it, you know."

"You mean, it is not enough for you to make you either glad or sorry. But be thankful that it is enough for some people."

"All things make me glad and sorry, too, I think. Going away now. When I come back——"

"I shall be gone," said Clara.

"I shall be a man——"

"And I an old woman——"

"For shame, Miss Benette! you will never grow old, I believe."

"Oh, yes, I shall; but I do not mind. It will be like a summer to grow old."

"I am sure it will!" I cried, with an enthusiasm that seemed to surprise her, so unconscious was she ever of any effect she had.

"But I shall grow old too; and there is not so very much difference between us. So then I shall seem your age; and, Miss Benette, when I do grow up, will you be my friend?"

"Always, Master Auchester, if you still wish it. And in my heart I do believe that friends are friends for ever."

The sweet smile she gave me—the sweeter words she spoke, were sufficient to assure me I should not be forgotten; and it was all I wished, for then my heart was fixed upon my future.

"But you will not be going to-morrow, I suppose?"

"No, I wish I were."

"So do I."

"Thank you," said I, rather disconcerted; "I shall go very soon, I suppose."

"It will not be long, I dare say," she answered, with another sweetest smile; and I felt it to be her kind wish for me, and was consoled. And when I left her she was standing quietly by her piano; nor did she raise her eyes to follow me to the door.

By one of those curious chances that befall some people more than others, I had a cold the next class-night. I was in an extremity of passion to be kept at home; that is to say, I rolled in my stifling bed with the sulks pressing heavily on my heart, and the headache upon my forehead. Millicent sat by me, and laughingly assured me I should soon be quite well again; I solemnly averred I should never be well—should never get up—should never see Davy any more—never go to Germany. But I went to sleep after all; for Davy, with his usual philanthropy, came all the way up to the house to inquire for me after the class, and his voice aroused and soothed me together. I may say that such a cold was a Godsend just then, as it prevented my having to do any lessons. The next day, being idle, I heard nothing of Davy; neither the next. I thought it very odd; but on the third morning I was permitted to go out, as it was very clear and bright. The smoke looked beautiful, almost like another kind of flame, as it swelled skywards, and I met Davy quite glowing with exercise.

"What a day for December!" said he; and cheerily held up a letter.

"Oh, Mr. Davy!" I cried; but he would not suffer me even to read the superscription.

"First for your mother. Will you turn back, and walk home with me?"

"I must not, Sir; I am to walk to the turnpike and back."

"Away, then! and I am very glad to hear it."

To do myself justice, I did not even run. I could, indeed, for all my impatient hope, scarcely help feeling there is no such blessing as pure fresh air that fans a brow whose fever has lately faded. I came at length to the toll-gate, and returned, braced for any adventure, to the door of my own home. I flew into the parlour; my mother and Davy were alone. My mother was wiping off a tear or two, and he seemed smiling on purpose.

"Oh, mother!" I exclaimed, running up to her; "please don't cry."

"My dear Charles, you are a silly little boy. After all, what will you do in Germany?"

She lifted me upon her lap. Davy walked up to the book-case.

"I find, Charles, that you must go immediately; and indeed it will be best if you travel with Mr. Santonio, and how could I send you alone, with such an opportunity to be taken care of? Mr. Davy, will you have the kindness to read that letter to my little boy?"

Davy thus admonished, gathered up the letter now lying open upon the table, and began to read it quite in his class voice, as if we two had been an imposing audience.

DEAR MADAM,—Although I have not had the pleasure of an introduction to you, I think the certificate of my cognisance by my friend Davy will be sufficient to induce you to allow me to take charge of your son at the end of this week, if he can then be ready, as I must leave England then, and return to Paris by the middle of February. Between this journey and that time, I shall be in Germany, to attend the examinations of the Cecilia School, at Lorbeerstadt. The Cecilia School now is exactly the place for your son, though he is six months too young to be admitted. At the same time, if he is to be admitted at all, he should at once be placed under direct training, and there are out-professors who undertake precisely this responsibility. My own experience proves that anything is better than beginning too late, or beginning too soon to work alone. I have made every inquiry which could be a proviso with you.

"Then here follows what would scarcely interest you," said Davy, breaking off.

"Your friend is quite right, Charles. Now can you say you are sure I may put faith in you?"

"What do you mean, mother? If you mean that I am to practise, *indeed* I will; I never want to do anything else, and I won't have any money to spend."

Davy came up to us and smiled: "I really think he is safe. You will let him come to me one evening, dear Madam?"

"Perhaps you can come to us. I really do not think we can spare him; we have so much to do in the way of preparation."

It was an admirable providence that my whole time was, from morning to night, taken up with my family. My sisters, assisted by Margareth, made me a dozen shirts, and hemmed for me three dozen handkerchiefs. I was being measured or fitted all day, and all the evening was running up and down stairs with the completed items. Oh! if you had seen my boxes you would have said that I ought to be very good to be so cared for, and very beautiful besides; yet I was neither, and was sorely longing to be away; such kindness pained me more than it pleased. I had a little jointed bed, which you would not have believed *was* a bed until it was set up: my mother admonished me if I found my bed comfortable to keep that in my box; but she had some experience of German beds, and English ones, too, under certain circumstances. I had a gridiron, and a coffee-pot, a spirit-lamp, and a case containing one knife and fork, one plate, one spoon. I had everything I could possibly want, and felt dreadfully bewildered. Clo was marking my stockings one morning when Davy came in; he gave me one of his little brown boxes, and in the box was a single cup and saucer of that glowing, delicate china. When he pulled it out of his pocket, I little knew what it was, and when I found out, how I cried!

"I have, indeed, brought you a small remembrance, Charles; but I am a small man, and you are a small boy, and I understand you are to have a very small establishment."

He said this cheerily, but I could not laugh; he put his kind arm round me, and I only wept the more. Clo was all the time quite seriously, as I have said, tracing ineffaceably my initials in German text, with crimson cotton—none of your delible inks—and Davy pretended to be very much interested in them.

"What! all those stockings, Charles?"

"Yes, Sir; you see we have provided for summer and winter," responded Clo as seriously as I have mentioned. "He will not

want any till we see him again, for he is to pay us a visit, if God spares him, next Christmas."

Davy sighed, and kissed my forehead—I clung to him. "Shall I see you again, Mr. Davy?"

"I have come to ask your mother whether I may take you to London; it is precisely what I came for, and I have a little plan."

Davy had actually an engagement in London, or feigned to have one; I have never been able to discover whether it was a fact or a fiction; and he proposed to my mother that I should sleep with him at his aunt's house one night, before I was deposited at the hotel where Santonio rested, and to which he had advised I should be brought.

I was in fits of delight at the idea of Davy's company, yet, after all, I did not have much of that, for he travelled to London on the top of the coach, and I was an inside passenger at my mother's request.

Then comes a sleep of memory, not unaccompanied by dreams—a dream of being hurled into a corner by a lady, and of jamming myself so that I could not stir hand or foot between her and the window—a dream of desperate efforts to extricate myself—a dream of sudden respite, cold air and high stars beyond and above the houses; a cracked horn; a flashing lantern—a dream of dark in a hackney-coach, and of stopping in a stilly street before a many-windowed mansion, as it seemed to me. Then I am aware to this hour of a dense headache, and bones almost knotted together, till there arrives the worst nightmare reality can breed—the smell of toast, muffins, and tea; the feeling of a knife and fork you cannot manage for sleepfulness, and the utter depression of your quicksilver.

I could not even look at Miss Lenhart, but I heard that her voice was going on all the time, and felt that she looked at me now and then. I was conveyed into bed by Davy without any exercise on my own part, and I slumbered in that sleep which absorbs all time, till very bright day. Then I awoke and found myself alone, though Davy had left a neat impression in the great soft bed. Presently I heard his steps, and his fingers on the lock. He brought my breakfast in his own hand, and while I forced myself to partake of it, he told me he should carry me to Santonio at two o'clock; the steamboat leaving London Bridge at six the same evening. And at two o'clock we arrived at the hotel. In a lofty apartment sat Santonio, near a table laid for dinner.

I beheld my boxes in one corner, and my violin-case strapped to the largest; but all Santonio's luggage consisted of that case of his which had been wrapped up warm in baize, and one portmanteau. He arose and welcomed us with a smile most amiable; and having shaken hands with Davy, took hold of both mine and held them, while still rallying in a few words about our punctuality. Then he rang for dinner, and I made stupendous efforts not to be a baby, which I should not have been sorry to find myself at that instant. The two masters talked together without noticing me, and presently I recovered; but only to be put upon the sofa, which was soft as a powder-puff, and told to go to sleep. I made magnificent determinations to keep awake, but in vain, and it was just as well I could not, though I did not think so when I awoke. For just then starting and sitting up, I beheld a lamp upon the table, and heard Santonio's voice in the entry, haranguing a waiter about a coach. But looking round and round into every corner I saw no Davy, and I cannot describe how I felt when I found he had kissed me asleep, and gone away altogether. As Santonio re-entered, the sweet cordiality with which he tempered his address to me was more painful than the roughest demeanour would have been just then, thrilling as I was with the sympathy I had never drawn except from Davy's heart, and which I had never lost since I had known him. It was as if my soul were suddenly unclad, and left to writhe naked in a sunless atmosphere; still I am glad to say I was grateful to Santonio. It was about five o'clock when we entered a hackney-coach, and were conveyed to the City from the wide West-end. The great river lay as a leaden dream while we ran across the bridge; but how dreamily, drowsily, I can never describe, was conveyed to me that arched darkness spanning the lesser gloom as we turned down dank, sweeping steps, and alighted amidst the heavy splash of that rolling tide. There was a confusion and hurry here that mazed my faculties; and most dreadfully alarmed I became at the thought of passing into that vessel set so deep into the water, and looking so large and helpless. I was on board, however, before I could calculate the possibilities of running away, and so getting home again. Santonio put his arm around me as I crossed to the deck, and I could not but feel how careful the great violin was of the little human instrument committed to his care. Fairly on deck, the whirling and booming—the crowd not too great, but so busy and anxious—the head-hung lamp, and the cheery peeps into cabins lighter

still through glittering wires, all gave motion to my spirit. I was soon more excited than ever, and glorified myself so much that I very nearly fell over the side of the vessel into the Thames, while I was watching the wheel that every now and then gave a sleepy start from the oily, dark water. Santonio was looking after our effects for a while, but it was he who rescued me in this instance, by pulling my great-coat (exactly like Fred's) that had been made expressly for me in the festival-town, and which, feeling very new, made me think about it a great deal more than it was worth. Then laughing heartily, but still not speaking, he led me downstairs. How magnificent I found all there! I was quite overpowered, never having been in any kind of vessel; but what most charmed me was a glimpse of a second wonderful region within the long dining-room—the feminine retreat, whose door was a little bit a-jar.

The smothered noise of gathering steam came from above, and most strange was it to hear the many-footed tramp overhead, as we sat upon the sofa, and spread beneath the oval windows all around. And presently I realised the long tables, and all that there was upon them, and was especially delighted to perceive some flowers mounted upon the epergnes.

I was cravingly hungry by this time, for the first time since I had left my home, and everything here reminded me of eating. Santonio, I suppose, anticipated this fact, for he asked me immediately what I should like. I said, "I should like some tea and a slice of cold meat." He seemed amused at my choice, and while he drank a glass of some wine or other, and ate a crust, I had all to myself a little round tray, with a short, stout tea-pot and enormous breakfast cup, set before me; with butter as white as milk, and cream as thick as butter; the butter being developed in a tiny pat, with a semblance of the steamship we were then in, stamped upon the top; also a plate covered with meat all over, upon beginning to clear which, I discovered another cartoon in blue of the same subject. After getting to the bottom of the cup, and a quarter uncovering the plate, I could do no more in that line, and Santonio asked me what I should like to do about sleeping. I was startled, for I had not thought about the coming night at all. He led me on the instant to a certain other door, and bade me peep in; I could only think of a picture I had seen of some catacombs; in fact, I think a catacomb preferable in every respect to a sleeping-cabin. The odours that rushed out, of brandy and lamp-oil, were but visionary terrors, compared with the aspect

of those supernaturally-constructed enclosed berths, in not a few of which the victims of that entombment had already deposited themselves.

"I can't sleep in there!" I said shudderingly, as I withdrew, and withdrawing, was inexpressibly revived by the air blowing down the staircase. "Oh! let us set up all night! on the sea, too!"

Santonio replied with great cordiality, that he should prefer such an arrangement to any other, and would see what could be contrived for me.

And so he did, and I can never surpass my own sensations of mere satisfaction, as I lay upon a seat on deck by ten o'clock, with a boat-cloak for my pillow, and a tarpaulin over my feet: Santonio by my side, with a cloak all over him, like a skin, his feet on his fiddle-case, and an exquisitely fragrant regalia in his mouth.

My feelings soon became those of careering ecstasy, careering among stars all clear in the darkness over us, of passionate delight rocked to a dream by the undulation I began to perceive in our seaward motion. I fell asleep about midnight, and woke again at dawn, but I experienced just enough then of existing circumstances in our position, to retreat again beneath the handkerchief I had spread upon my face; and again I slept and dreamed.

CHAPTER XXV

AT noon, when at length I roused myself, we were no longer upon the sea. We swept on tranquilly between banks more picturesque, more glorious, more laden with spells for me than any haven I had fortified with Spanish castles. Castles there were, too, or what I took for castles, silvery grey amidst leafless trees, and sometimes softest pine woods with their clinging mist. Then came shining country, where the sky met the sun-bright slopes, and then a quiet sail at rest in the tiny harbour. But an hour or two brought me to the idea of cities, though even they were as cities in a dream. And yet this was not the Rhine; but I made sure it was so, having forgotten Clo's geography lessons, and that there could be any other river in Germany; so that when Santonio told me its real name, I was very angry at it. After I had wearied myself with gazing,

he drew me back to my seat, and began to speak more consecutively than he had done yet.

"Now, Sir," said he, "do you see that castle?" pointing to something in the prospect which may or may not have been a castle, but which I immediately realised as one. "You are to be shut up there. Really and seriously, you have more faith than any one I ever had the honour of introducing yet, under any circumstances whatever. Pray, don't you feel any curiosity about your destination?"

"Yes, Sir, plenty; but I forgot what I was going for."

"And where you were going to?"

"Sir, I did not know where. I thought you would tell me when you liked."

"I don't know myself, but I dare say we shall fall in with your favourite 'Chevalier.'"

"My favourite who, sir?"

"The gentleman who enslaved you at the performance of the 'Messiah,' in your part of the world."

"Oh, Sir! what can I ever say to you? I cannot bear it?"

"Cannot bear what? Nay, you must not expect too much of him now you know who he is. He is merely a very clever composer."

"Oh, Sir! how did you ever find out?"

"By writing to Milans-André—another idol for you, by the way."

"Oh! I know all about Milans-André."

"Indeed! And pray what is all about him?"

"I know he plays wonderfully, and fills a large theatre with one pianoforte. Stop—he has a handsome face, and long arms, rather too long for his body. He is very—let me see—something, but not something else; and very famous, but not beloved."

"Who told you that? a most coherent description, as it happens."

"Miss Lawrence."

"Miss Lawrence is a blab. So you have no curiosity to learn your fate?"

"I know *that*, but I should like to know where I am going."

"To an old gentleman in a hollow cave."

"I wish I were, and then perhaps he would teach me to make gold."

"That is like a Jew—fie! but the fiddle has made gold."

"Why like a Jew? Because they are rich? Jews, I mean?"

"Richer generally than most folks, but not all either."

"Oh, Sir! I did not mean money;" but as I looked at him, I felt he would not, could not, understand what I meant, so I returned to the former charge.

"Does he live in a cellar, Sir? or in a very old house?"

"In an old house, certainly. But you won't like him, Auchester, at least not at first; only he will work you rightly and take care of your morals and health."

"How, sir?"

"By locking you up when you are at home, and sending you to walk out every day."

"Don't they all send the boys out to walk in Germany then?"

"I suppose so. But how shall you like being locked up?"

"In the dark, Sir, do you mean?"

"No, boy; to practise in a little cave of your own."

"What *does* make you call it a cave?"

"Because great treasures are hidden there for such as like the bore of grubbing them up. You have no idea, by the way, how much dirty work there is to do anything at all in music."

"I suppose you mean, to *get* at anything? But it cannot be worse than what people go through to get to heaven?"

"If that is your notion, you are all right. I have taken some trouble to get you into this place, for the old gentleman is a whimsical one, and takes very few pupils now."

"Did you know him, Sir, before you heard of him for me?"

"He taught me all I know, except what I taught myself, and that was precious little. But that was before he came to Lorbeerstadt. I knew nothing about this place. Your favourite learned of him when he was your age, and long afterwards."

"Who, Sir? the same?"

"The conductor."

"Oh, Sir!" It was a dreadful thing to feel I had, as it were, got hold of him and lost him again; but Santonio's manner was such that I did not think he could mean the same person.

"Are you sure it is the same, Mr. Santonio?" I reiterated again, and yet again, while my companion, whose laugh had passed into a yawn, was gazing at the smoke.

"Sure? Of course I am sure. I know every conductor in Europe."

"I dare say you do, Sir; but this is not a common conductor."

"No conductors are common, my friend. He is very clever, a genius, too, and will do a great deal; but he is too young at present to be talked of without caution."

"Why, Sir?"

"Because we may spoil him."

I was indignant, I was sick, but so impotent I could only say, "Sir, has he ever heard *you* play?"

"I cannot tell really all the people who hear me play. I don't know who they are in public."

"Have you ever heard *him* play?"

"No."

"Oh, Sir! then how *can* you know? What makes you call him Chevalier? Is that his real name?"

"I tell you precisely what I was told, my boy; Milans-André calls him 'My young friend the Chevalier'—nothing else. Most likely they gave him the order."

Santonio was now talking Dutch to me, and yet I could not bring myself to detain him by further questioning, for he had strolled to the staircase. Soon afterwards the dinner-bell rang. The afternoon being a little spent, we came up again and rested. It was twilight now, and my heart throbbed, as it ever does, in that intermediate dream. Soon Santonio retired to smoke, and I then lay all along a seat, and looked to heaven until I fell into a dose; and all I felt was real, and I knew less of what was passing around me than of that which stirred within. Long it may have been, but it seemed very soon and suddenly, that I was rudely brought to myself by a sound and skurry, and a suspension of our progress. It was dark, and bleak besides, and as foggy as I had ever seen it in England—the lamp at our head was like a moon; and all about me there were shapes, not sights, of houses; and echoes, not sounds, of voices from the shore.

The shore, indeed! And my first impression of Germany was one of simple astonishment, to find it, on the whole, so much like, or so little unlike England. I told Santonio so much, as he stood next me, and curbed me with his arm from going forwards. He answered that he supposed I thought they all lived in fiddle-cases, and slept upon pianofortes. I was longing to land indefinitely. I knew not where I was, how near or how far from my appointed place of rest. I will not say my heart was sad, it was only sore, to find Santonio, though so handsome, not quite so beautiful a spirit as my first friend,

Lenhart Davy. We watched almost half the passengers out of the boat; the rest were to continue their fresh-water route to a large city far away, and we were the last to land of all who landed there.

In less than an hour, thanks to Santonio's quickening of the pulses of existence at our first landing-place, we were safe in a hackney-coach (very unlike any other conveyance), if indeed it could be called safe to be so bestowed, as that I was continually precipitated against Santonio. His violin-case had never left his hand since we quitted the vessel; and this was just as well, for it might have suffered from the jolting. Its master was all kindness now. "Cheer up," said he; "do not let your idea of German life begin here. You will soon find plenty to amuse you." He rubbed the reeking fog from one glass with his handkerchief forthwith, and I, peeping out, saw something of houses drawing near. They were dim, and tall, and dark, as if they had never fronted daylight. It took us quite half an hour to reach the village, notwithstanding, for our pace was laboriously tardy; and again and again I wished I had stayed with Santonio at the little inn where we took the coach, and to which he was himself to return to sleep, having bespoken a bed there; for I felt that day would have done everything for me in manning and spiring me, and that there was too much mystery in my transition state already to bear the surcharging mystery of night with thought undaunted. Coming into that first street, I believed we should stop every instant, for the faint few lamps, strung here and there, gave me a notion of gabled windows and grey-black arches, nothing more definite than any dream: so much the better. Still we stopped not anywhere in that region, nor even when, having passed the market-place with its little colonnade, we turned, or were shaken, into a quiet square. It came upon me like a nook of panorama; but I heard the splash of falling water before I beheld, starting from the mist, its shape, as it poured into a basin of shadowy stone beneath a skeleton tree, whose lowest sprays I could have touched as we drove near the fountain, so close we came. And then I saw before me a church, and could discern the stately steps and portico, even the crosses on the graves, which bade me remember that they died also in Germany. No organ echoes pealed or choral song resounded, no chime struck; but my heart beat all these tunes, and, for the first time, I associated the feeling of religion with any earth-built shrine.

It was in a street beyond the square, and overlooked by the tower of the church itself, that, at length, we stopped indeed, and that I found myself bewildered at once by darkness and expectation, standing upon the pavement before a foreign doorway, enough for any picture of the brain.

"Now," said my escort, "I will take you upstairs first—for you would never find your way—and then return and see after all these things. The man won't run away with them, I believe—he is too ugly to be anything but honest. I hope you do not expect a footman to open the door?"

"I dislike footmen; but there is no knocker. Please show me the bell, Mr. Santonio."

"Please remember that this is a mountain which contains many caves besides that to which we are about to commit you. And if you interfere with anybody else's cave, the inhabitant will spring up yours with gunpowder."

"I know that a great many people live in one house, my mother said so; but she never told me how you got into the houses."

"I will tell you now. You see the bells here like organ stops; this is yours. Number I cannot read, but I know it from the description I took care to procure. I will ring now, and they will let us in."

I found, after waiting in profound expectation, that the door had set itself open, just as the gate of the London Temple Garden is wont to do; but, instead of finding access to sunshine and beds of flowers, we were plunged, on our entrance, into darkness which might be felt.

Santonio, evidently accustomed to all conventionalities of all countries, expressed no astonishment, and did not even grumble, as I should have expected a person of his temperament to do. I was so astonished that I could not speak. How soon I learned to love that very darkness! and to leap up and down those very stairs, even in the darkness! though I now held Santonio's hand so tightly, that I could feel the lissom muscles double up and bend in. He drew me after him gently and carefully to the first floor, and again to the second without speaking, and then we stood still to take breath.

"That was a pull!" he observed. "Suppose the old gentleman has gone to bed?"

"Oh, Sir! then I will go back with you until to-morrow."

"No, indeed." He laid hold upon my arm. "Listen! hush!"

I stood listening from head to foot. I heard the beloved, but unfamiliar voice; creeping down another storey, it came—*my* violin, or *the* violin, somewhere up in the clouds. I longed to rush forwards now, and positively ran up the stairs yet remaining. There upon my one hand was the door through whose key-hole, whose every crack that sound had streamed, and I knew it as I passed, and waited for Santonio upon the haunted precinct.

“Now,” said he, arriving very leisurely at the top, “we shall go in to see the old gentleman.”

“Will he have a beard, sir, as he is a Jew?”

“Who told you he has a Jew-beard? Nevertheless he has a beard; but, pray hold your tongue about the Jews—at least till you know him a little better.”

I do not mean, thought I diffidently, to talk to the old gentleman. If he is a Jew I shall know it, and it will be enough; but I did not say so to Santonio, who did not appear to prize his lineage, as I did the half of mine. My heart began to beat, faster than from the steep ascent, when he, without preparing me further, rapped very vigorously upon another unseen door. I heard no voice reply, but I concluded he did, as he deliberately turned the lock, and drew me immediately after him as I had shrunk behind him. I need not have been afraid—the room was empty. It was a room full of dusky light; that is, all tones which blended into it were dim, and its quaint nicety put every new world notion out of the way for the time. The candles upon the table were brightly trimmed, but not wax—only slender wax ones beamed in twisted sconces, from the desk of an organ that took up the whole side of the room, opposing us as we entered, and whose pipes were to my imagining childhood lost in the clouds, indeed, for the roof of the room had been broken to admit them. The double key-board, open, glittered black and white, and I was only too glad to be able to examine it as closely as I wished. The room had no carpet, but I did not miss it or want it, for the floor was satin bright with polish, and its general effect was ebony, while that of the furniture was oak. There was a curious large closet in a corner, like another little room put away into this one; but what surprised me most was that the chamber was left to itself.

“Where is he?” said Santonio, appealing to the silence; but then he seemed to be reminded, and shouted very loud in German some name I could not realise, but which I write, having since realised. “Aronach! where art thou?”

In German, and very loud, a voice replied, as coming down the organ pipes—"I am aloft chastising an evil spirit; nor will I descend until I have packed the devil downstairs." At this instant, more at hand than the sound I had met upon the staircase, there was a wail as of a violin in pain, but I could not tell whether it was a fiddle or a child, until the wail, in continuing, shifted from semitone to semitone.

Santonio sat down in one of the chairs and laughed; then arose, having recovered himself, and observed, "If this is his behaviour, I may as well go and see after your boxes; keep yourself here till I come back; but if he come down, salute him in German, and it will be all right."

He retired and I remained; and now I resolved to have another good look. One side of the room I had not yet examined. Next the door I found a trio or quartet of three-legged stools, fixed one into the other, and nearest them a harpsichord—a very harpsichord with crooked legs. It was covered with baize, and a pile of music-books reposed upon the baize, besides some antique instrument cases. Other and larger cases were on the floor beneath the harpsichord, there hung a talisman or two of glittering brass upon the wall, by floating ribbons of red.

Then I fastened myself upon the pictures, and those strange wreaths of withered leaves that waved between them, and whose serest hues befitted well their vicinage. As I stood beneath those pictures those dead-brown garlands rustled as if my light breath had been the autumn wind. I was stricken at once with melancholy and romance, but I understood not clearly the precise charm of those reliques, or my melancholy would have lost itself in romance alone.

There was one portrait of Bach. I knew it again, though it was a worthier hint of him than Davy's; and underneath that portrait was something of the same kind, which vividly fascinated me by its subject. It was a very young head, almost that of an infant, lying, rather than bending over an oblong book, such, in shape, as those represented in pictures of literary cherubs. The face was more than half forehead, which the clustering locks could not conceal, though they strove to shadow; and, in revenge, the hair swept back, and tumbled sideways, curling into the very swell of the tender shoulder. The countenance was of sun-bright witchery, lustrous as an elf of summer laughing out of a full-blown rose. Tiny hands were doubled round the book, and the lips wore

themselves a smile that seemed to stir and dimple, and to flutter those floating ringlets. It was strange I was, though so unutterably drawn to it, in nothing reminded of any child or man I had ever seen, but merely thought it an ideal of the infant music, if music could personate infancy. After a long, long gaze, I looked away, expressly to have the delight of returning to it; and then I saw the stove and approved of it, instead of missing, as I was told at home I should miss, the hearth-rug and roseate fire-shine. Indeed, the stove was much more in keeping here, according to my outlandish taste.

Before I returned to the picture, Santonio re-entered, and finding me still alone, took up a broom which he discovered in some region, and, mounted on a chair, made with it no very gentle demonstrations upon the ceiling, which was low, and which he could thus easily reach. In about ten minutes more, I could feel, no less than hear a footstep I did not know, for I am generally cognisant of footsteps. This was cautious and slow, yet not heavy; and I was aware it could be none other than that of my master presumptive. If I could have turned myself into a mustard-pot, to delay my introduction, I would have done so without the slightest hesitation; but, no! I remained myself, and he, all himself, opened the door, and came in. I had expected a tall man—broad; here was a little gentleman, no bigger than Davy, with a firm and defiant tread, clad in a garment that wrapped about his feet, in colour brown, that passed well into the atmosphere of his cave. He confronted Santonio as if that wonder were a little girl in petticoats, with no more reverence, and not less benevolence, for he laid one arm upon his shoulder, and embraced him, as in England only very young and tender brothers embrace, or a son embraces his father. There was complaisance together with condescension in his aspect; but when he turned upon me, both complaisance and condescension were overpast, and a lour of indifference clouded my very faculties as with a film of worldly fear. Then he chucked me under the chin, and held me by it a moment without my being aware whether he examined me or not, so conveniently disposed were his black eye-lashes; and then he let me go again, and turned his back upon me.

“Sit!” said he to Santonio, and then he threw his hand behind him, and pointing, without turning his head, indicated the group of stools. I nervously disentangled one, and sat down upon it then and there by the side of the very harpsichord. Santonio being also seated, and wearing, though as

cool as usual, a less dominant aspect, the brisk demon marched to the bureau, which I had taken little heed of, under the window, but which, upon his opening, I discovered to be full of all sorts of drawers and pigeon-holes, where a family of young mice would have enjoyed a game at hide-and-seek. He stood there writing, without any apology, for some time, and only left off when a female servant, brilliant and stolid as a Dutch doll, threw the door open again, to bring in supper.

She carried both tureens and dishes, and went into the closet after bottles of wine and a table-cloth; and everything she did was very orderly, and done very quietly. She spoke to Aronach, having arranged the table; and he aroused and wiped his pen, and closed the bureau. Then he came to Santonio, and addressed him in most beautiful clear German, such German as was my mother's mother-tongue.

"I travelled very comfortably, thank you," said Santonio, in reply to some inquiry suggestive of the journey, "and I am glad to see you younger than ever."

"Oh! my sort don't die; we are tough as hempen cloth. It is *that* make which frets itself threadbare"—he pointed obviously at me. "What is to be done with him, eh?"

"To be left here, of course, as we agreed."

"Recollect my conditions. I turn him out if he become ill."

"Oh! he is very well indeed; they are all pale in England, they have no sun."

"*Be* well then!" said Aronach, threateningly, yet not terrifyingly, "and *keep* well!"

What a silvery stream swept over his shirt-bosom! it was soft as whitest moonlight. Is that a beard? thought I—how beautiful must the high-priest have looked! This thought still touched me, when in came a boy in a blouse, and I heard no more of his practice as I now recognised it, though the wail still came from above, fitful and woe-begone. This boy was tall and slender, and his face, though he had an elegant head, was too formed and adult to be agreeable or very taking for me. His only expression was that of haughty self-content; but there was no real pride in his bearing, and no reserve. His hands were large, but very well articulated and extremely white; there was no spirit in them, and no spirituality in his aspect. He took no notice of me, except to curl his upper lip—which was not short, and which a curl did not become—as he lifted a second stool and carried it up to the table; nor did he

wait to be asked to sit down upon it, and having done so, to smooth his hair off his forehead, and lean his elbows upon the table. Then Aronach took a chair, and admonished Santonio to do the same. The latter made himself instantly at home, but most charmingly so, and began to help himself from a dish directly. The young gentleman upon the stool was just about to lift the cover from the tureen in the same style, when Aronach roused, and looking grandly upon him said or rather muttered, "Where are thy manners? Is it thy place in my house to ape my guests? See to thy companion there, who is wearier than thou, and yet he waits. Go and bring him up, or thou shalt give thy supper to the cat's daughter."

"So I will," responded the blouse, with assurance; and leaving his stool abruptly, he ran into the closet aforementioned, and brought back a kitten, which as he held it by the nape of its neck came peaceably enough, but, upon his dropping it roughly to the floor, set up a squeak. Now the wrath of Aronach appeared too profound for utterance. Raising his deep-set but lightsome eyes from a perfect thicket of lashes, he gave the impertinent one a look which reminded me of Van Amburgh in the lion's den. Then, ladling three or four spoonfuls of soup or broth into a plate, he set the plate upon the floor and the kitten at it, so seriously, that I dared not laugh. The kitten, meantime, unused to strong meats, for it was not a week-old mite—mewed and whined in antiphon to the savage lamentations of another cat in the closet, its maternal parent. The blouse never stirred an inch, save carelessly to sneer over his shoulder at me, and I never loved him from that moment. But Santonio nodded to me significantly, as to say, "Come here!" and I came and planted my stool at his side.

Aronach took no notice, but went on pouring coffee, one cup of which he set by the kitten. Again she piteously smelled, but finding it even worse than the broth, she crept up to the closet-door, and smelled at that.

"Go up!" said Aronach to the blouse, "and send Burney to his supper. He shall have the cat's supper, as thou hast given thine to the cat."

He went out sulkily, and the wail above ceased. I also heard footsteps, but he came back again alone.

"He won't come down."

"Won't! did he say won't, Iskar? Have a care!"

"He says he wants no supper."

"That I have taken away his stomach, eh? Come hither, thou black and white bird that art not yet a pyet."

This was to me; I was just sliding from my stool.

"Eat and drink first, and then thou shalt carry it to him. Thou lookest better brought up. Don't grimace, Iskar, or thou shalt sleep in the cupboard with the cat, and the rats shall dance in thy fine curls. So now eat, Aukester, if that be thy name."

"Sir, I am Carl; will you please to call me Carl?"

He gave me a glance from behind the coffee-stand. Sparks as from steel seemed to come out of his orbs and fly about my brain, but I was not frightened the least, for the lips of this austerest of autocrats were smiling like sunlight beneath the silver hair. I saw at this moment that Aronach had a bowl of smoking milk crammed with bread by his side, and believing it to be for the violin up in the clouds, and concluding inferentially that the unseen was some one very small, I entreated Aronach without fear to let me carry it to him while yet it smoked.

He did not object, but rather stared, and observed to Santonio, "His father makes a baby of him; to give a boy such stuff is enough to make a girl grow up instead." Still he handed it to me with the caution, "If thou fallest on thy nose in going up to Heaven, the kitten will lose her supper, for the milk is all used up in the town." I could just see a very narrow set of steps, exactly like a belfry-stair, when I opened the door, and having shut it again and found myself in darkness, I concluded to leave the bowl on the ground till I had explored to the top. I did so and spun upwards, discovering another door, to which, though also in darkness, the wail of the violin became my light. I just unlatched it, and returned for my burden, carefully adjusting spoon and basin on the road back. I knocked first, not to alarm the semi-tonic inhabitant; and then, receiving no intimation, entered of my own accord. It was a queer region, hardly so superior as a garret, extremely low and vast, with mountains of lumber in every corner, and in the midst a pile of boxes with a port-manteau or two, and many items of property which for me were nondescript. It had no furniture of its own besides, but to do it justice it was weather-proof. I could see all this rugged imagery on the instant, but not so easily I discerned a little figure in the very centre of the boxes, sitting upon the least of the boxes, and solitarily regaling the silence, without either

desk or book, with what had made me suffer below stairs. The organ-pipes came up here, and reached to the very roof; they gave me a strange feeling, as of something misplaced and mangled, but otherwise I was charmed to discover them. I hastened across the floor. The player was certainly not an adept—a tiny, lonely-looking boy, who, as I went up to him, almost let his fiddle fall with fright, and shrunk from me, as some little children do from dogs. I was as tall again as he, and felt quite manly. “I am only come,” I said, “to bring your supper—have it while it is hot; it is so good then!”

Do not believe, sweet reader, that my German was more polished than my English; it was quite the same. He dropped his bow upon the nearest box, and depressing his violin so that it touched the ground while he still held it, looked up at me with such a wistful wonder, his lip still quivering, his pretty hair all ruffled up.

“I don’t want it, thank you.”

“You must eat it; you have been up here ever so long.”

“Yes, a good while; please take it away. Are you the new one who was coming?”

“Who said I was coming?”

“The master. He said you would beat us both, and get first to Cecilia.”

“That is because I am older. I can’t play the least in the world. I don’t know even how to hold the bow. Come, *do* eat this good-looking stuff.”

“I don’t think I can, I feel so sick.”

“That is because you *do* want something to eat.”

“It is not that”—he touched my jacket. “This is what they wear in England. I do wish you would talk English to me.”

I was touched, almost into tears. “You are such a little darling!” I exclaimed; and I would have given anything to fondle him, but I was afraid of staying, so I took a spoonful of the milk and put it to his lips, still another and another, till he had taken it all; and then I said, “Do not practise any more;” for he was disconsolately gathering up his bow.

“I must until bed-time; but I am so sleepy.”

“Why are you left up here? I will stay with you.”

“No, no, you must not. I only came up here because the master caught me looking out of the window this morning, and the windows here don’t show you anything but the sky.”

As I went out at the door I looked after him again. He

was just finishing one of those long yawns that babes delight in. The moment I found my way below, I marched to the master's chair. He was awful in his dignity then, with the wine bottle beside him, and a glass held half-way to his lips.

"Sir, he has eaten it all, but he is so very sleepy; mayn't he go to bed?"

Santonio was so overcome with laughter at my audacity, though I was really very much alarmed, that he leaned back in his chair and shook again. Aronach bent upon me his flowing beard: "Dost thou know to refrain thyself, as well as thou knowest to rebuke thine elders?" But I could plainly see he was not angry, for he arose and tapped upon the ceiling with a stout oak staff that he fished from the unimagined closet. Then the little one came down and into the room, shy of Santonio, and keeping behind his chair, as he murmured "good-night" to Aronach. The latter gave him a nod, which would not have disgraced Jove in full council. Santonio requested very kindly that I too might go to bed, and in a few minutes I found myself in that little cave of my own, of which he had made mention.

Its entrance was hard by, through one of the very doors I had noticed when the glimmer showed me the staircase, and it entirely answered my expectations, in so far as it was very dim and haunted-looking, very unlike my own room in England, or any of our rooms at home. It had a stove, a looking-glass, and a press large enough to contain a bride's trousseau complete. There was also a recess which seemed lined with London fog, but which, on examination by the light of my candle, I found to contain the bed in a box, of which my mother had forewarned me. I could no more have slept in it than if it had been a coffin, and for the first time I fully appreciated her provision for my comfort in this particular. My boxes were all there, and I uncorded them and drew forth my keys. My excellent sister Clo had packed in one trunk the bed and bedding, and one set of night-clothes, also a variety of toilette necessities in holland bags. It was quite an affair to lift out the pieces; they were fitted into each other so beautifully, that it was natural to imagine they could never be got back again. None but an experienced feminine hand could have accomplished such a feat, and very carefully had I been inducted into the puzzlement of putting the parts together. I had just unfolded the tight white mattress, so narrow, but so exactly wide enough, when Santonio knocked

at the door to bid me good-night and farewell; and as he came in he assisted me in the accomplishment of my plans with that assiduous deftness which pre-eminently distinguishes the instrumental artist. He most kindly offered to see me into bed; but that was out of the question, so I let him go with my hearty thanks. It was not the least a melancholy feeling with which I stretched myself, all tingling with my rapid ablutions, beneath my home-blanket. I did not the least long after home, nor the least experience the mother-sickness that is the very treble-string of humility to many a hero in his inaugurative exile; but I felt extremely old, grand, and self-reliant; especially satisfied, in spite of my present ignorance, that by some means or other this Aronach would make a man of me, and not a trifler. I was just asleep when I heard a hand on the lock, and that no dream, for a voice vociferated, roughly enough—"Out with the light!" I sprang up and opened the door.

"It is only my little lamp, sir, that I brought with me, and it is very safe as you see; but still, if you wish it, I will try to sleep in the dark. I have never liked to do so, because it excites me."

"Bah! thou art too young to know the meaning of excitement. But for the sake of some one else who loves the night-lamp, thou mayest keep thine eyes open with it, and thank him too, for it is his doing. Now, get back to bed! and don't come out again—the quick and living walk not about in night-smocks here."

I heard him bolt me in as soon as I shut the door. I cannot say this proceeding pleased me, but on the contrary cost me many a cold sweat until I became accustomed to it. I lay a little while awake, now spying out such variations from English style as had escaped me on my first acquaintance with my quarters; then reverted to Aronach's dark hint about the person who, like me, was excited by the darkness; and at last recollected my contemporaries, and speculated upon their present circumstantialia. Most softly did that poor little soul present himself to mine as he played with my buttons, and I secretly determined to become his protector and ally; as for the imp in the blouse, I abjured him at first sight; perhaps because he was, though repugnant to my taste, handsome and elegant, and I was neither.

CHAPTER XXVI

I AWOKE with sonorous cries, and sounds of bells, and songs of sellers, and the dim ringing of wheels on a frosty soil. Hard and white the day-dews stood upon the windows; the sky was clear as light itself; and my soul sprang as into the arms of freedom. It occurred to me that I was perhaps late, and I dressed fast: about half-way to the end, I heard the violins begin, both of them, but now they outrageously contradicted each other in different directions, and I could keep by my ear to neither.

I made the utmost haste, but, as in most cases, it was least speed; I pulled off a button, and then a shoe-string came loose. I had to begin very nearly all over again; and when at length equipped, I recalled the incarceration of the previous night, and wondered how long I should stay there: but a sudden impulse sent me to the door, and immediately it yielded to my hand. "He has been here, then," I thought, "and has not awakened me, because I was tired last night. How good to be sure! not at all what I expected." I sallied forth to the landing; it was like a room itself, but still dark—dark for day-time; and I could only make out its extent by the glimmer through the crack beneath every door. I listened at each first, not knowing at the instant which was which, but the violins asserted themselves, and I chose one to unlock on my own responsibility. I had made a mistake here, and come into the untenanted organ-room where we had supped. There the wintry light reigned full, and freshened up the old tints till they gleamed no more dusky, but rich.

The pictures and wreaths of other years gave welcome to me, that magic child especially; nor less the harpsichord unopened, quiet, while those sounds of younger violins broke through and through my fancy, and made my heart swell up till I could have fainted with emotion.

But of all that pressed upon me, the crowning sense was of that silent organ lost in the shady roof; the sun playing upon those columned tubes, and the black-white keyboard clustering to hide its wealth of "unheard melodies," sweeter than those "*heard*," as one has sung, who can surely never have *heard* them!

The chamber had been brushed and swept, but still the fine

dust flew, and caught the sunshine on its eddies like another shade of light. There was no one in the room, and, my first flush over, I felt alone and idle. The table was spread for breakfast as I discovered last of all; and I question whether such coffee as stood upon the stove so cosily could be surpassed even in Arabia. It was so perfect that it stood the test of sugarlessness, which I preferred, if possible. Standing to eat and drink in all haste, a speculation stung me—where was my violin? It had not even slept with me; I had missed it in my room—that baby of mine, that doll, that ladykin! I looked everywhere, at least everywhere I could; the closet-door I did not try, justly supposing that it was not my place to do so; and at last I concluded to attack my fellow-pupils.

I found my small friend's door very easily, and turned the key to admit myself. The room, to my amazement, was precisely like my own, even to that bed in the recess; and the inmate was not alarmed, for he evidently expected me.

"Oh!" he said, after putting up his lips to mine, "Marc has your study for this morning; the master gave it him to keep till you were ready. But mind you lock me in again when you get out, or he will flog you and me."

"Did he ever flog you yet?"

"No, and he does not call it flog; but he did tie Marc's hands together one day, and he said it was the same to him to do that as for an English master to flog."

"A very mild type, I think. But who is Marc?"

"Marc Iskar; you saw him last night. He won't speak to me; he says I am too young."

"So much the better for you. And what is your little name?"

"I am Starwood Burney; but I should like you to call me Star, as my papa does."

"That I will, my German aster!"

"Aster is Latin; I have begun Latin. But do please go, I have so much to do, and he will be so very angry; so very, very cross!"

"How dare you say so, when he has never even tied your hands together? You should not be hurt nor disgraced, little Starling; if I were there, I would be punished instead, for I have twice your strength. But you should try to love him while you fear him."

"You speak like a great man, and I will try. But please to go now, for I find this very hard."

I left him, having selfishly shrunk from the necessity to interrogate Iskar.

I stole to his door. I was really electrified as I stood—not with envy, but with amazement! He was already a wonderful mechanist. Such sallies of execution were to me tremendous, but his tone did not charm me, and I imagined it might be the defect of his instrument that it sounded thin and cold, unlike my notion altogether, and frosty as the frost without. Clearly and crisply it saluted me as I entered. The room was like ours—the little one's and mine; but it was gaily adorned with pictures of the lowest order (such as are hawked about the streets in England), and only conspicuous from their unnaturally vivid colouring. They were chiefly figures of ladies dancing, or of gentlemen brandishing the sword and helmet—theatrical subjects, as I afterwards discovered. Iskar was sitting before his desk, and had his face from me: as I approached, my awe was doubled at his performance, for I beheld Corelli's solos. I had heard of those from Davy. Another desk was also near him, and a second violin-case stood upon the floor. I asked him very modestly whether they were mine. He replied, without regarding me, "That sheet of paper has your exercise upon it, and if you cannot play it, you are to look in Marenthal's Prolusion, which is in the bureau under the desk. You are to take all these things into your own room."

There was something in the tones of the blouse—he was yet in blouse—that irritated me intensely. His voice was defined as that of his violin, and to the full as frosty. I was only too happy to retire. Then, sitting upon my own bed, I examined the exercise. It was drearily indistinct; a copy, and I could make nothing of it. The mere Germanisms of the novel rests and signs appalled me. I could neither handle the violin nor steady the bow; but I had carefully borne in mind the methods I had observed when I had had opportunity, and I stooped to take this child of music from its cradle. It was no more mine own than I had expected; an awkward bulky frame it had, and I did not feel to love it nor to bring it to my heart. Something must be done, I felt, and I returned to the organ-room. I found the Prolusion, as Iskar said—an awfully Faustish tome, with rusty clasps, the letters worn off the back. I was in doom certainly. It was close black national type, and I pored and bored myself over it—leaf after leaf—until, blissfully, I arrived at the very exercise prepared for me. It

was presented in illustration, and there were saw-like enunciations of every step; but half the words were unknown to me, and I grew rigid with despair. "Oh!" I cried aloud, "if some one would only tell me! if Davy were only here! if Lenhart Davy knew!" Still I slackened not in my most laughable labour, endeavouring to interpret such words as I could not translate by their connection with others I did know, by their look and make—their euphony. I was vocalising them very loud, and had made out already the first position, when a rattle of the closet lock turned me all over cold. I listened, it came again; a tremendous "So!" followed, and the door opening displayed Aronach himself in the glories of a morning gown. How could he have got in there, and how have come out upon me so suddenly without any warning? and, above all, how would he behave to me, finding me so ignorant? I believe that on account of my very ignorance I found favour in his sight—he truly wise: for, merely alluding to my condition in this form, "Thou hast shown thyself faithful, only keep thy faith," he bade me bring my traps in there, and assured me—merely by his aspect—that he would clear every stone from my path.

When I returned he was standing between the organ and the window: a grander picture could not be perpetrated of the life-long labouring, and, for love's sake, aspiring artist. His furrowed forehead was clear as rutted snow in the serene of sunlight, as he appeared then; and through all the sternness with which he spoke I discerned the gentleness of art's impression. And after the most careful initiation into the simplest mechanical process, he dismissed me to work alone, nor did I relax from that one exercise for a week.

But a great deal chanced in that week besides. We spent each day alike, except Sunday. On other days we breakfasted, very soon after it was light, on milk porridge, or bread and coffee. But sometimes Aronach would breakfast alone in his cave, which was that very closet I mentioned, and in which the day must have been developed about as decidedly as beneath the ground. However, he had his lamp in there, and his private escritoir, besides all kinds of books and papers, that were seldom produced in our presence, and then only one at a time.

The kitten's basket was there, too, and there were shelves upon shelves, containing napery and all sorts of oddities, that had their nest there after being hatched in crannies of the old

man's brain. The first time I took a peep, I discerned my own violin, carefully enough housed, but quite above my reach. I fumed a little, of course, but did not betray myself; and it was well I did not, as Iskar and little Starwood both practised on common fiddles scraping could not rasp nor inexperience injure.

After breakfast, we worked till noon under lock and key. At noon we dined, and at two o'clock were sent to walk. I do not know whether I put down Aronach as a tyrant. He must, at least, be so written, in that his whims, no less than his laws, were unalterable. A whim it certainly was that we should always walk one way, and the same distance every day, unless he sent us on any special errand. This promenade, though monotonous, became dear to me, and I soon learned to appreciate the morale of that régime. We could not go to Cecilia, which had its village only two miles off, and whose soft blue gentle hill was near enough to woo, and distant enough to tempt the dreamer—nor would our guide, at hand, permit us to approach the precinct consecrated to such artistic graduation as we had not yet attained.

In the mornings, Aronach was either absent abroad, instructing, or writing at home. But we never got at him, and were not suffered to apply to him until the evening. As we could not play truant, unless we had battered down the doors, so we could not associate with each other unreservedly, except in our walks; and on those occasions, pretty often, our master came, too, calling on his friends as he passed their houses, while we paraded up and down; but whenever he was by our side, silent as a ruminant ox, and awful as Apis to the Egyptians for Starwood and for me. When he came not it would have been charming, but for Iskar, who was either too fine to talk or else had nothing at his command to say, and whose deportment was so drearily sarcastic that neither of us, his companions, ever ventured an original or a sympathising remark.

On my first Sunday, I took Starwood to church—that is, we preceded Aronach, who was lecturing Iskar, and sent us on beforehand. The little one was bright this morning, and as I looked upon his musically-built brow, and trembling colour, and expressive eyes—blue as the air at evening, and full of that sort of light—I could not make clear to myself how it was that he so disliked his work, and drooped beneath it in the effort to master his frail body by his struggling soul. We had

turned into the place of the church—the leafless lindens were whispering to it—and we rested by the stone basin, while the bells came springing through the frost-clear day, like—yet how unlike—England! I was afraid my small companion would be cold, and I put one of his long little hands into my pocket with my own, while I made him tuck the other into both his warm gloves, till, by degrees—having coaxed and comforted him to the utmost—he told me more about himself than I had known before. He was extremely timid to talk, shy as a fawn, even to me. But at last I made out satisfactorily the secret of his antipathy to his violin. I cannot remember all his words; besides, they were too infantine to write; but he described himself as having spent that most forlorn of all untended childhoods which befalls the motherless offspring of the needy artist in England. His father had lived in London, and taught music, but had left him constantly alone; and I also discovered he had been, and was still, an organist. The child assured me his mamma had been a beautiful player, but that no one ever opened her grand piano, which stood in a parlour above the street.

“I always knew I was to grow up to music,” said Starwood; “for mamma had told me so, and she taught me my notes when I was only four years old. When she died, no one taught me; and while papa was out all day, I played with my toys, and sat upon the stairs. One day, some men came up, and nearly fell over me. I ran into the parlour, and they came too. They knocked the piano about, and began to take its legs off. I called out to them, ‘You must not touch that—it is my mamma’s!’”

“They did not take any notice, but made a great noise, and at last they carried it away—all of it—upon their shoulders. I saw it go downstairs, and I sat there all day and cried; I was very miserable, I know. Papa came home at last; when I was so unhappy I thought I must die, and it was all in the dark, and very cold. He carried me in his arms, and made me tell him why I cried. I said, ‘Because of the piano;’ and he told me he had sold it, because it was so large, and because he wanted the money. I know he was very poor, Charles; for a gentleman, who was very kind to him, gave him some more money to send me here, or I could not have come. But I wish he had kept me at home, and taught me himself.”

“But how,” I replied, “can you be sorry now? We ought

to be most gloriously happy to find ourselves here. But you fret, my dear little boy, and mope, and that makes you thin, and takes the strength out of you that you want for music."

"Ah, that is not it. You don't know, Charles, how I feel; I know you don't, for you love your violin."

"I should think I did!"

"Well, I am strange to it, and don't love it; at least, don't love to play it."

"But why did you not tell your father so before he sent you here? You know you will never do anything well that you don't love to do—it is impossible. And not to love the violin, Star, for shame!"

"It is not that—oh, don't be angry with me!—but my music is in the beautiful cold keys."

"Darling little Star! I beg your pardon; but, then, why don't you learn the piano?"

"But, Charles, I cannot. I was sent here to learn the violin, and I *must* study it. Aronach does not let any one study the pianoforte under him now."

"He did then?"

"Yes, a long time ago, when he lived in another place, about thirty miles off. Have you heard Aronach play the organ?"

"No; have you?"

"Oh, every Sunday."

"You don't say so, Star! is it not delicious?"

"Charles, I like it best of all the days in the week, because he plays. Such different playing from what they have at church in England!"

"I shall go up to the organ, and see him play."

"Charles, Charles! don't; please don't; we never do."

"Then I shall be the first, for go I must. There is precious Aronach himself. I will run after him wherever he goes."

I did so most rudely—forsaking Starwood, who did not dare to follow me; but I would not miss the opportunity. I spun after Aronach so noiselessly as that he had no notion I was following, though in general he had eyes behind; and he did not perceive me until the service had absolutely begun. Then I made myself visible, and caught a frown, which was accompanied by a helpless condition truly edifying: for his arms, and hands, and eyes, and feet were all equally on service. I therefore remained, and made out more about the instrument than I had made out my whole life before. His was a genuine

organ-hand, that could stretch itself indefinitely, and yet double up so crawlingly that the fingers, as they lay, were like stems of corrugated ivory; and I watched only less than I listened. The choir—so full and perfect, trained to every individual—mounted its effects, as it were, upon those of the controlling harmonies. There was a depth in these that supported their air-waving tones, as pillars solid and polished a vaulted roof, where shadows waver and nestle. I found a book, and sang at intervals, but generally preferred to receive the actual impression. I think my first mother-feeling for Germany was born that Sunday in pleasurable pain.

None can know who has not felt—none feel who has not heard—the spell of those haunting services in the land of Luther! The chorale so grave and powerful, with its interpieces so light and florid, like slender fretworks on a marble shrine—the unisonous pause, the antiphonal repose, the deep sense of worship stirred by the sense of sound. From that Sunday I always went with Aronach, unbidden, but unforbidden; and as I learned to be very expert in stopping, I substituted very speedily the functionary who had performed the office before my advent.

CHAPTER XXVII

It cannot be supposed that I forgot my home, or that I failed to institute an immediate correspondence, which was thus checked in the bud. Aronach, finding me one night, after we had all retired, with my little ink-bottle on the floor, and myself outsprawled writing upon my knees close into my lamp, very coolly carried my sheet, pen, and ink away, and informed me that he never permitted his pupils to write home at all, or to write anything except what he set them to do.

I should have revolted outright against this restriction but for a saving discovery I made on the morrow—that our master himself dismissed from his own hand a bulletin of our health and record of our progress once a month. Precious specimens no doubt they were, these, of hard-hearted fact! Neither were we allowed to receive letters ourselves from home. Only simple communications were permitted to himself; and the effect of this rule, so autocratic, was desperately painful upon me at first. I hungered for some sweet morsel of English, served up

in English character: I wanted to hear more than that all were well; and as for Lenhart Davy, had not my love informed my memory, I should have forgotten him altogether. But it was very soon I began to realise that this judicious interdiction lent a tonic bitterness to my life. I was completely abstracted, and upon that passage of my inwardly eventful history I can never glance back without a quiet tear or two; it was heavenly in its unabsolved and absolute serenity. It was the one mood that befitted a growing heart too apt to burn—a busy brain too apt to vision—if that head and heart were ever to be raised from the valley of material life into the mountain heights of art.

I fear my remembrances are dull just here; for the glory that touched them was of the moment, and too subtle to be retrieved; but it is impossible not just to remind myself of them before returning to my adventure-maze.

For six months, that passed as swiftly as six weeks of a certain existence, we went on together—I should have said—hand-in-hand, but that my Starwood's diffident melancholy and Iskar's travestied hauteur would have held me back, and I was ardent to impel myself forward. So, though at first I had to work almost to desperation, in order to join the evening contrapunto class, I soon left the other two behind, and Aronach taught me alone, which was an advantage it would be impossible to overrate. Not that he ever commended—it was not in him; he was too exigent, too stern; his powers never condescended; he was never known to qualify—he was never personally made acquaintance with; something of the hermit blended mystically with his acumen, so that the primary advantage of our position was his supreme standard, insensibly our own also—the secondary, our undisturbed seclusion.

As I said, we walked the same distance day by day. Nothing is uniform to a soul really set on the idealities of art. Everything, though it changes not, suggests to the mind of the musician. Though not a full-grown mind, I had all joy in that unchanging route; for as the year grew and rounded, all, as it were, aspired without changing. Meditation mellowed every circumstance till it ripened to an unalterable charm. I always walked with Starwood, who still made me very anxious—suddenly and increasingly so pale and frail he became, that I fully expected him to die that spring. Indeed, he hardly cleared it; and I should have mentioned my fears to Aronach but that he seemed fully aware of all I feared. But, instead of getting rid of the weakling, as I dreaded he might choose

to do, he physicked him and kept him in his bed-box twice or thrice a week, and taciturnly indulged him—giving him hot possets at night, and cooling drinks by day. The poor little fellow was very grateful, but still sad; and I was astonished that Aronach still expected him to practise, unless he was in bed; and to write, except his head ached. The indefinite disorder very seldom reached that climax though, and chiefly asserted itself in baby-yawns and occasional whimpers, constant weariness, and entire loss of appetite. I at length discovered his age, and Iskar's also. The latter had passed eleven, but was not so nearly twelve as I; the first was scarcely nine, and so small he might have been only six. It struck me he would not be much older, and I had learned to love him too well in his infantine and affecting weakness. I ventured, one day, to ask Aronach whether his father knew he was ill. I was answered—

“He is not ill.”

“But, Sir, he is low and weak!”

“He will always be weak while thou art petting him. Who can take more care of him than I? His father?”

“Oh, Master! I know you are good; but what if he dies?”

“His work will not have killed him, nor his weakness; if people are to die they die, if they are to live they live.”

I was silenced, not convinced; but from that hour I did not think he would die; nor did he.

Aronach was strict, he never departed from a rule; it was his chief and salient characteristic. He never held what one may call conversation with us on any subject except our studies, and then it was in exemplification, not suggestively. It was a beneficial reserve perhaps; but I could not have endured it for ever, and might have become impatient but for the auspices of the season: it was the very beginning of May. Though shut up to a great extent, as *we* were, the weather made itself an entrance, blue sky swelled, and the glow of morning woke me before dawn. The lindens near the fountain began to blossom, and in the garden of the church the oak-leaves clustered. I saw nothing of the country yet, and could only dream of unknown beauty in untraversed paths. The Cecilia examinations approached. Aronach attended almost every day at the school. I knew just so much and no more, and as much expected to assist thereat, as I should have hoped to come of age on my twelfth birthday. My birthday was in that month of May, in the third week; and, though I was

innocent of the fact, it was a fact that it was one of Cecilia's feast days as well as my own. It was, however, such a delicious morning, that it nearly sent me mad up in my little room to be mewed there, when such thousands upon thousands roamed wheresoever they would; for I never took it into account how many of those wanderers would rejoice to be so shut up as I was, could they only rest. And it struck me that at least one day in the year one ought to be permitted to do exactly as one desired, even were the desire to drown one's self the prevalent aspiration. There are times when it is not only natural, but necessary to rebel against authority; so that, had I not been locked in, I would have certainly escaped and made a ramble on my own responsibility; for I should have acted upon as pure impulse as when—usually industrious enough as I was—I laid down my fiddle and wasted my time.

As I gazed upon the window, and smelt the utter sweetness of the atmosphere, hardly so much air as flower-spirit, the voice of perfume, I was wishful of the wings of all the flies, and envious of the butterflies that blundered in and floated out. I am sure I had been idle at least an hour, and had no prospect of taking heed to my ways, so long as the sky was blue as that sky, and the breeze blew in, when I felt, rather than heard, a soft little knock at the door. I fancied it was the servant dashing her broom-stick upon the landing; but in a moment it was repeated, and I was very shy to take any notice, feeling that a goblin could let itself in, and had better do so than be admitted. Then I was roused indeed, and my own inaction scared me, for I recognised Starwood's voice.

"Charles, I want to come in—mayn't I a minute, please?"

"Really, Star, it is too bad of you to give me such a turn. How can I open the door? Pray come in directly, and tell me what is the matter."

He boggled at the lock for a minute or two, but at last admitted himself.

"Why, Star, how frightened you look! Have you been flogged at last? and is the master home already?"

"No! no! Charles—something most extraordinary."

I really could but laugh, the child repeated the words with such an awe.

"A gentleman, Charles, has come. He opened my door while I was practising. I should have been dreadfully frightened, but he was so kind and came in so gently. He thought you were here, Charles, and asked for you; he says

he does not know your name, but that he could tell me whether you were here if I would describe you. I said how pale you were, with such dark eyes, and about your playing, and he said—

“‘All right, go and fetch him, or send him to me; will you be so kind?’”

“How could you be quite sure? It may be some one for Iskar; who is pale, and has dark eyes.”

“He said it was the violin that came at Christmas, I was to send; and you came at Christmas. Besides, he looks very like a friend you would have; he is not like anybody else.”

“What is he like, Star?”

“His face is so very bright and clever that I could not look at it; but I saw his beautiful curling hair. I never saw such curling hair.”

“Come in with me, then, Star.”

“No, he said I was not to come too, that I might go on with my music. He calls it music, but I don’t think it is much like it.”

Now, I knew who was there, as well as if an angel had spoken to me, and said, “It is he for whom you waited.” Had I not known in very assurance, I should have forced my little friend to go back with me, that I might not meet alone a stranger; as it was, I only longed to fly, and to fly alone into that presence, for which I then felt I had been waiting, though I had known it not.

I rushed from my little prison enfranchised, ecstatic; but I misapprehended my own sensations. The magnetic power was so appalling that, as I reached the threshold of that other room, a dark shock came over my eyes, and partly from my haste, in part from that dazzling blindness, I staggered and fell across the doorway, and could not try to rise.

But his arm was round me—before I fell I felt it, and as I lay I was crushed, abandoned in very worship. None worship as the child-enthusiast, save the enthusiast who worshipped even as a child. I scarcely tried to rise, but he lifted me with that strong and slender arm, and set me upon my feet. Before he spoke I spoke, but I gasped so wildly, that my words are not in my power to recall. I only remember that I named him “our Conductor—the Conductor!” and that still with his light touch on my shoulder, he turned his head aside. I looked up freely then, and the glance I then caught of that brow, those eyes half averted, half bent upon me with the old

pitying sweetness; partly shaded by earthly sympathy, but for the most part lifted into light beyond my knowledge; the one glimpse forewarned me not to yield to the emotions he raised within me, lest I should trouble him more than needed. It was not a minute, I am sure, before I mastered myself and stood before him firmly.

"Sir, the Herr Aronach is at the Cecilia School to-day; it is the first day of the grand examination, at least I believe so; I know they are all very busy there, and have been so for some time. I don't think the master will be home until quite the evening, for he told us to dine alone; but, if you will allow me, I will run and bring you a coach from the Kell Platz which will take you to Cecilia in an hour; I have heard the master say so."

He was looking towards the window; and while I spoke, his face, so exquisitely pale, grew gradually warm and bright, his cheek mantled, his eyes laughed within the lashes.

"All very good, and wise, and amiable—most amiable!" said he; "and such pretty German, too! But I come to see you, and not your master, here. I have been a long time coming, but I could not get here before, because I had not done my lessons. I have finished them now, and want a game of play. Will you have a game with me?"

Before I could answer, he resumed, in tones of the most ravishing gaiety—

"And you are all so pale—so pale, that I am ashamed of you! What have you been all doing?"

"Practising, Sir—at least not I, for I have been idle all the morning, for the very first time since I came here, I assure you. I kept thinking and thinking, and expecting and expecting, though I could not tell what, and now I know."

"But I am still very much ashamed of Aronach. Does he lock you up?" with a star of mischief shining from the very middle of each eye.

"Yes, Sir; always, as well as the others, of course. I like it very much, too; it is so safe."

"Not always, it seems. Well, now let us have a race to the river, and then if you are pale still, I shall take you to Cecilia, and show somebody that it is a question whether he can keep you at home, for all he bolts you in. The day is so fine, so beautiful, that I think the music itself may have a holiday."

"Sir, do you really mean it? Oh, if you do, pray let us go

to Cecilia *now*; for perhaps there is music to hear, and, oh! it is so very, *very* long, since I heard any."

"Is it so dear to you, that you would rather seek it than all the sunshine, and all the heart of spring? Ah! too young to find that anything is better than music, and more to be desired!"

"Yes, Sir, yes! please to take me; I won't be in the way, it will be enough to walk by you; I don't want you to talk."

"But I do want to talk; I cannot keep quiet; I have a lady's tongue; and yours, I fancy, is not much shorter. We will, therefore, go now."

"This moment, Sir. Oh! I would rather go than have the festival over again."

"The festival! the festival! It *is* the festival! Is it not to-day a festival? and *every* day in May?"

He looked as he spoke so divinely happy, that it is so the angels must appear in their everlasting spring. I rushed into my room and rummaged for my cap, also for a pair of new gloves; but I was not very long, though I shook so violently that it was a task to pull on those skins. Returning, I found him still at the window; he was leaning upon the bureau; not near the harpsichord—not before the organ—but, gazing child-like, into the bright blue morning. He was dressed in a summer coat, short and very loose, that hung almost in folds upon his delicate figure: the collar falling low revealed the throat, so white, so regal; and through the buttonhole fluttered the ribbon of the Chevalier. He carried also a robe-like cloak upon his arm, lined with silk, and amply tasselled. I ventured to take it from him, but he gently, and yet forcibly, drew it again to himself, saying, "It is too heavy for thee. May I not already say 'thou'?"

"Oh, Sir, if you will, but let me go first, it is so dark always upon the stairs."

"One does not love darkness, truly; we will escape together."

He took my hand, and I tried to lead him; but, after all, it was he who led me step by step. I did not know the road to Cecilia, and I said so.

"Oh! I suppose not; sly Aronach! but I do, and that is sufficient; is it not? Why the colour is coming back already. And I see your eyes begin to know me. I am so glad. Ah! they tell more now than they will tell some day."

"Sir, you are too good, but I thank you. I like to feel

well. And I feel more than well to-day. I am too glad, I think."

"Never too well or glad, it is not possible. Never too bright and hopeful. Never too blissfully rejoicing. Tell me your name, if you please."

"Sir, my name is nothing."

"That is better than *Norval*." He laughed, as at himself.

"Sir, however did you get to hear that? Oh!"—I quite screamed as the reminiscence shook me—"oh, Sir, did you write the 'Tone-Wreath'?"

He gave me a look which seemed to drink up my soul; "I plucked a garland, but it was beyond the Grampian Hills."

"You *did* write it! I knew it when I heard it, Sir. I am so delighted! I knew the instant she played it, and she thought so too: but of course we could not be quite sure."

He made the very slightest gesture of impatience. "Never mind the 'Tone-Wreath'! There are May-bells enough on the hills that we are to go to."

I was insensibly reminded of his race; but its bitterness was all sheathed in beauty when I looked again. So beautiful was he, that I could not help looking at his face; so we are drawn to the evening star, so to the morning roses, but with how different a spell! for just where theirs is closed, did his begin its secret, still attraction; the loveliness, the symmetry were lost, as the majestic spirit seized upon the soul through the sight, and conquered.

"You have not told me your name. Is it so difficult for me to pronounce? I will try very hard to say it, and I wish to know it."

No "I will" was ever so irresistible—"Charles Auchester."

"That is a tell-tale name. But I can never forget what was written for me on your forehead, the day you were so kind to me in a foreign country. Do you like me, Charles? Well enough to wish to know me?"

I can never describe the innocent regality of his manner here—it was something never to be imagined, that voice in that peculiar key.

"Sir, I know how many friends you must have, and how they must admire you. I don't think any of them love you as I do, and always did ever since that day. I wish I could tell you, but it's of no use. I can't, though I quite burn to tell you, and to make you know. I do love you better than I love my life, and you are the only person I love better than

music. I would go to the other end of the world, and never see you any more, rather than I would be in your way or tire you. Will you believe me?"

"Come!" he answered brightly, delicately, "I know all you wish to say, because I can feel myself; but I could not bear you at the other end of the world just now, because I like you near me; and were you and I to go away from each other, as we must, I should still feel you near me, for whatever is, or has been, is for ever to me."

"Sir, I can only thank you, and that means more than I can say; but I cannot think why you like me. It is most exquisite, but I do not understand it."

He smiled, and his eye kindled. "I shall not tell you, I see you do not know; I do not wish for you to know. But tell me now, will you not, do you enter the school this semester?"

"Yes, Sir, I believe so. At least I came here on purpose; but Aronach does not tell us much, you know, sir."

"Is that tall young gentleman to enter?"

"Yes, Sir; Marc Iskar."

"And the least, how do you name him?"

Like a flash of lightning a conception struck me through and through.

"Sir, he is called Starwood Burney, from England. How I do wish I might tell you something!"

"You can tell me anything; there is plenty of time and room, and no one to hear, if it be a pretty little secret."

"It is a secret, but not a little one, nor pretty either. It is about Starwood. I don't think I ought to trouble you about it, and yet I must tell you, because I think you can do anything you please."

"Like a prince in the Arabian tales," he answered, brightly; "I fear I am poor in comparison with such, for I can only help in *one* way."

"And that one way is the very way I want, Sir. Starwood loves the pianoforte. I have seen him change all over when he talked of it, as if it were his real life. It is not a real life he lives with that violin."

"I wish it had been thyself, whose real life it is, my child," he replied, with a tenderness I could ill brook, could less account for; "but still thy wish shall be mine. Would the little one go with me? He seems terrified to be spoken to, and it would make my heart beat to flutter him."

"Sir, that is just like you to say so; but I am very certain

he would soon love you—not as I do, that would be impossible; but so much that you would not be sorry you had taken him away. But, oh! if I had known that you would take and teach, I would never have taken up the violin, but have come and thrown myself at your feet, Sir, and have held upon you till you promised to take me. I thought, Sir, somehow that you did not teach.”

“Understand me, then, that what I say I say to satisfy you; you are better as you are, better than you could be with me. I am a wanderer, and it is not my right to teach; I am bound to another craft, and the only one for the perfecting of which it is not my right to call myself poor. Do you understand, Charles?”

“I think, Sir, that you mean you make music, and that therefore you have no time for the dirty work.”

He broke into a burst of laughter, like joy-bells. “There is as much dirty work, however, in what you call *making* music. But what I meant for you to understand was this, that I do not take money for instructing; because that would be to take the bread from the mouths of hundreds I love and honour. I have money enough; and you know how sweet it is even to give money; how much sweeter to give what cannot be bought by money! I shall take this little friend of mine to my own home, if he will go, and I am permitted to do so; and I shall treat him as my son, because he will, indeed, be my music-child; and no more indebted to me than I am to music, or than we all are to Jehovah.”

“Sir, you are certainly a Jew if you say ‘Jehovah;’ I was quite sure of it before, and I am so pleased.”

“I cannot contradict thee, but I am almost sorry thou knowest there are even such people as Jews.”

“Why so, Sir? pray tell me. I should have thought that *you*, before all other persons, would have rejoiced over them.”

“Why so, indeed! but because the mystery of their very name is enough to break the head, and perhaps the heart. But, now of this little one; he must, indeed, be covered as a bird in the nest, and shall be. And if I turn him not forth a strong-winged wonder, thou wilt stand up and have to answer for him; is it not so?”

“Sir, I am certain he will play wonderfully upon what he calls those beautiful cold keys.”

“Ah!” he answered dreamily; “and so, indeed, they are, whose very tones are but as different shadows of the same one-

coloured light, the ice-blue darkness, and the snowy azure blaze. He has right, if he thinks them cold, to find them *alone* beautiful." He spoke as if in sleep.

"Sir, I do not know what you mean, for I never heard even Milans-André."

"You are to hear him, then; it is positively needful."

Again the raillery pointed every word, as if arrows "dipped in balm."

"I mean that I scarcely know what those keys are like, for I never heard them really played, except by one young lady. I did not find the 'Tone-Wreath' cold, but I thought, when she played with Santonio, that her playing was cold—cold, compared with his—for he was playing, as you know, Sir, the violin."

"You are right; yes. The Violin is the Violet!"

These words, vividly pronounced, and so mystical to the uninitiated, were as burning wisdom to my soul. I could have claimed them as my own, so exactly did they respond to my own unexpressed necessities. But indeed, and in truth, the most singular trait of the presence beside me was, that nothing falling from his lips surprised me. I was prepared for all, though everything was new. He did not talk incessantly—on the contrary, his remarks seemed sudden, as a breeze up-borne and dying into the noonday. There was that in them which cannot be conveyed, although conserved; the tones, the manner, so changeful, yet all cast in grace unutterable; passing from vagrant, never wanton mirth, into pungent, but never supercilious gravity. Such recollection only proves that the beautiful essence flows not well into the form of words—for I remember every word he spoke—but rather dies in being uttered forth—itself as music.

It was dusty in the highway, and we met no one for at least a mile, except the peasants, who passed into the landscape as part of its picture; the intense green of May, and its quickening blossoms, strewn every nook and plantation; but the sweetness of the country, so exuberant just there, only seemed to frame, with fitting ornament, the one idea I contemplated—that he was close at hand. There had been much sun, and one was naturally inclined to shade in the thrilling May heats, which permeate the veins almost like love's fever, and are as exciting to the pulses.

At last we came to a brook, a lovely freshet, broadening into a mill-stream; for we could see far off in the clear air the flash

of that wheel, and hear its last murmuring fall. But here at hand it was all lonely, unspanned by any bridge, and having its feathery banks unspoiled by any clearing hand. A knot of beautiful beech-trees threw dark kisses on the trembling water; there were wildest rushes here, and the thick spring leaves of the yet unbloomed forget-me-not on either hand. The blue hill of Cecilia lay yet before us, but something in my companion's face made me conjecture that here he wished to rest. Before he even suggested it, I pulled out my cambric handkerchief, and running on before him, laid it beneath the drooping beech-boughs on the swelling grass. I came back to him again, and entreated him to repose. He even flushed with satisfaction at my request, which I made, as I ever do, rather impertinently. He ran, too, with me, and taking out his own handkerchief, which was a royal purple silk, he spread it beside mine, and drew me to that throne with his transparent fingers upon my hand. I say transparent, for they were as though the roseate blood shone through, and the wandering violet veins showed the clearness of the unfretted palm. But it was a hand too refined for model beauty, too thin and rare for the youth, the almost boyhood that shone on his forehead, and in his unwearied eye. The brightness of heaven seemed to pour itself upon my soul as I sat beside him, and felt that no one in the whole world was at that moment so near him as I. He pulled a few rushes from the margin, and began to weave a sort of basket. So fleetly his fingers twisted and untwisted themselves, that it was as if he were accustomed to do nothing but sit and weave green rushes the livelong day.

"Pull me some more!" he said, at length, imploringly; and I, who had been absorbed in those clear fingers playing, looked up at him as I stretched my arm. His eyes shone with the starlight of pure abstraction, and I answered not except by gathering the rushes, breaking them off, and laying them one by one across his knees. The pretty work was nearly finished; it was the loveliest green casket I could have fancied, with a plaited handle. It looked like a fairy field-flung treasure. I wished it were for me. When it was quite ready, and as complete and perfect as nature's own work, he rose, and, seizing the lowest branch of the swaying beech grove, hung the plaything upon it, and said, "I wish it were filled with ripe red strawberries."

"Why so, Sir?" I ventured.

"Because one would like to imagine a little child finding a green basket by the dusty way, filled with strawberries."

We arose, and again walked on.

"Sir, I would rather have the basket than the strawberries."

"I wish a little child may be of your mind. Were you happy, Charles, when you were a little child?"

"Sir, I was always longing to be a man. I never considered what it was to be a little child."

"Thou art a boy, and that is to be a man-child—the beautiful fate! But it is thy beautiful fate to teach others also, as only children teach."

"I, Sir; how?"

"Charles, a man may be always longing to be an angel, and never consider what it is to be a man."

His voice was as a sudden wind springing up amidst solitary leaves, it was so fitful, so vaguely sweet. I looked upon him indeed for the first time with trembling, since I had been with him that day. He had fallen into a stiller step, for we had reached the foot of the ascent. It never occurred to me that I was not expected at Cecilia. I thought of nothing but that I should accompany him. He suddenly again addressed me, in English.

"Did St. Michel ever recover the use of his arm?"

I was quite embarrassed. "I never asked about him, Sir; but I dare say he did."

"I thought you would have known. You *should* have asked, I think. Was he a rich man or a poor man?"

"How do you mean, Sir? He was well off, I should suppose, for he used to dress a great deal, and had a horse, and taught all over the town. Mr. Davy said he was as popular as Giardini."

"Mr. Davy was who? Your godfather?"

"My musical godfather I should say, Sir. He took me to the festival, and had I not accidentally met him I should never have gone there—have never seen you—oh, Sir——"

"Nothing is accidental that happens to you, to such as you. But I should have been very sorry not to have seen you. I thought you were a little messenger from the other world."

"It does seem very strange, Sir; at least two things especially."

"What is the first, then?"

"First, that I should serve you; and the second, that you should like me."

"No, believe me, it is not strange"—he still spoke in that

beautiful pure English, swift and keen, as his German was mild and slow—"not strange that you should serve me, because there was a secret agreement between us that we should either serve the other. Had you been in my place I should have run to fetch you water, but I fear I should have spilled a drop or two. And how could I but like you, when you came before me like something of my own in that crowd, that multitude in nothing of me?"

"Sir," I answered, to save myself from saying what I really felt; "how beautifully you speak English!"

He resumed in German: "That is nothing; because we can have no real language. I make myself think in all. I dream first in this, and then in that; so that, amidst the floating fragments, as in the strange mixture we call an *orchestra*, some accent may be expressed from the many voices of the language of our unknown home."

As he said these words, his tones, so clear and reverent, became mystical and inward—I was absolved from communion with that soul—his eye travelling onwards, was already with the lime-trees at the summit of the hill we had nearly reached, and he appeared to have forgotten me. I felt how frail, how dissoluble, were the fiery links that bound my feeble spirit to that strong immortal. But how little I knew it yet!

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE school of Cecilia was not only at the summit of the hill, it was the only building on the summit; it was isolated, and in its isolation grand. There were cottages in orchards, vine-gardens, fertile lands, an ancient church, sprinkled upon the sides, or nestling in the slopes; but itself looked lonely and consecrated, as in verity it might be named. A belt of glorious trees, dark and dense as a Druid grove, surrounded with an older growth the modern superstructure; but its basis had been a feudal ruin, whose entrance still remained; a hall, a wide waste of room, of rugged symmetry and almost twilight atmosphere. A court-yard in front was paved with stone, and here were carriages and unharnessed horses feeding happily. The doorway of the hall was free; we entered together; and my companion left me one moment while he made some arrangements with the porter, who was quite alone in his

corner. Otherwise, silence reigned, and also it seemed with solitude; for no one peered among the strong square pillars that upheld as rude a gallery—the approach to which was by a sweeping staircase of the brightest oak with noble balustrades. Two figures in bronze looked down from the landing-place on either hand, and as we passed between them I felt their size, if not their beauty, overawe me as the shadow of the entrance. They were, strange to say, not counterparts; though companion forms of the same head, the same face, the same dun laurel crown; but the one gathered its drapery to its breast, and stretched its hand beckoningly towards the portal—the other with outstretched arm, pointed with an expression almost amounting to menace down the gallery. In niched archways there, one door after another met the eye, massive and polished, but all closed.

I implicitly trusted in my companion. I felt sure he possessed a charm to open all those doors, and I followed him as he still lightly, as if upon grass, stepped from entrance to entrance, not pausing until he reached the bend of the gallery. Here was a door unlike the others—wider, slighter, of cloth and glass; and stealing from within those media, with a murmur soft as incense, came a mist of choral sounds, confusing me and captivating me at once, so that I did not care to stir until the mist dissolved and ceased, and I was yet by my companion's side without the door.

"We may enter now, I think," he said; for he had waited reverently as I; and he gently pushed those folds.

They slid back, and we entered a narrow lobby, very dim and disenchanted looking. Still softly we proceeded to another door within, which I had not discovered, and he touched that too with an air of subtile and still authority. I was dazzled the first instant; but he took my hand directly, and drew me forwards with him to a seat in some region of enchantment. As I sat by him there, I soon recovered myself to the utmost, and beheld before me a sight which I shall not easily forget, nor ever cease to hold as it was presented to me on that occasion.

It was a vast and vaulted room, whether of delicate or decided architecture I could not possibly declare—such a dream it was of wreaths and mystic floral arches. Pillars twined with gold-bloomed lime branches rose burthened with them to the roof, there mixing into the long festoons of oak-leaf, that hung as if they grew there from the grey-brown rafters. Everywhere was a drooping odour that had been oppressive, most un-

endurably sweet, but for the strong air wafted and ruffling through the open windows on either hand.

We were sitting quite behind all others, on the loftiest tier of seats, that were raised step by step so gently upwards to the back, and beneath us were seats all full, where none turned nor seemed to talk; for all eyes were surely allured and riveted by the scenery to the fronting end. It was a lofty, arched recess, spanning the extreme width of the hall; a window, half a dome, of glass poured down a condensed light upon two galleries within, which leaned into the form of the arch itself, and were so thickly interlaced with green, that nothing else was visible except the figures which filled them draped in white, side by side, in shinging rows, like angels—so I thought. Young men and boys above, in flowing robes as choristers, overhung the maiden forms of the gallery below, and of these last every one wore roses on the breast, as well as glistening raiment. These galleries of greenery were themselves overhanging a platform covered with dark green cloth, exquisitely fluted at the sides, and drawn in front over three or four steps that raised it from the flooring of the hall. A band in two divisions graced the ground floor. I caught the sight immediately; but upon the platform itself stood a pianoforte alone, a table covered with dark green velvet, and about a dozen dark green velvet chairs. These last were all filled except one, and its late occupant had pushed that one chair back while he stood at the top of the table, with something glittering in his hand; and other somethings glittering before him upon the dark green surface. As we entered, indeed, he was so standing, and I took in all I have related with one glance; it was, though green, so definite.

“Look well at that gentleman who stands,” whispered my guide, most slowly; “it is he who is dispensing the prizes. He is Monsieur Milans-André, whom you wished to see.”

I am blessed with a long sight, and I took a long survey; but lest I should prejudice the reader, my criticisms shall remain in limbo.

“When we heard the singing it was that he had just dispensed a medal, and it is so the fellow competitors hail the successful student. If I mistake not, there is another advancing; but it is too far for us to hear his name. Do you see your master at the awful table? But, soft! I think his face is not this way.”

“Oh!” I thought, and I laughed in my sleeve; “he is

dreaming I am safe at home, if he dreams about me at all, which is a question." But I was not looking after him—I took care to watch Milans-André, feeling sure my guide would prefer not to be stared upon in a public place like that.

The voice that called the candidates was high in key, and not unrefined; but what best pleased me was to see one advance; a boy, all blushing and bowing, to receive a golden medal, which Milans-André, his very self, with his own hands, flung round the youngling's neck by its long blue ribbon. For then the same sweet verse in semi-chorus sounded from the loftiest gallery; the males alone repeating it for their brother. I could not distinguish the words, but the style was quite alla Tedesca.

Then another youth approached, and received more airily a silver token, with the same blue ribbon and songful welcome. Another and another, and at last the girls were called.

"See!" said my guide, "they have put the ladies last! That shall not be when I take the reins of the committee. Oh! for the Cecilian chivalry, what a taunting remembrance I will make it."

He was smiling, but I was surprised at the eagerness of his tones.

"Does it matter, Sir?" said I.

"Signify? it signifies so much the more that it is a little thing, a little token. But it shall not grow; it shall not swell. See, see! look, Charles! what name was that?"

I had not heard it either, but the impetuosity in his tones was so peculiar, that I was constrained to look up at him. His eye was dilated; a singular flash of light rather than flush of colour, glowed upon his face, as if glory from the noon-day sun had poured itself through the impervious roof. But his gaze forbade my gaze, it was so fixed and piercing upon something at the end of the hall. Imperceptibly to myself I followed it. The first maiden who had approached the chair was now turning to re-pass into her place. She was clad like the galleried ones, in white; but her whole aspect was unlike theirs; for, instead of the slow step and lingering blush, her movement was a sort of flight, as if her feet were sandalled with the wind, back again among the crowd; and as she fled, you could only discern some strange gleam of unusual grace in a countenance drooping, but not bashfully, and veiled with waves, not ringlets, of hair, more dark than pine trees at midnight: also, it was impossible not to notice the angry putting back of one gloved hand, which crushed up the golden medal and an end

of the azure ribbon, while the other was trailing upon the ground.

"She does not like it; she is proud, I suppose!" said I; and I laughed almost aloud. "I thought you knew them all, Sir?"

"No, Charles, I was never here before, but as I am to have something to do with what they do soon, I thought I had a right to come to-day."

"A right!" said I; "who else, if you had not the right, Sir? But still I wonder how we got in so easily; I mean I, for if you had not brought me, I could not, I suppose, have come."

"It is this," he answered, smiling, and he touched his professor's cloak or robe, which was now encircling his shoulders, and waved about him pliantly. "They all wear the same, on entering these walls at least, who sit at the green table."

The choral welcome, meantime, had pealed from the lower gallery, and another had advanced and retired from the ranks beneath. My companion was intently gazing, not at the maiden troop, but at the deep festoons above us. He seemed to see nothing there, though, and the very position of his hands, resting upon each other and entirely relaxed, bore witness to the languor of his abstraction. It occurred to me how very cool they were, both those who distributed, and those who received the medals; I felt there was an absence of the strict romance, if I may so name it, I had expected when I entered; for as we sat, and whence we saw, all was ideal to the sight, and the sense was even lost in the spiritual appreciation of an exact proportionateness to the occasion. Yet the silence alternating with the rising and abating voices—the harmony of the colouring and shadowing—the dim rustle of the green festoons—the waftures of woody and blossomy fragrance—the in-door forest feeling, so fresh and wild—all should have stood me in stead, perhaps, of the needless enthusiasm I should have looked for in such a meeting, or have witnessed without surprise. I was not wise enough at that time to define the precise degree and kind of enthusiasm I should have required to content me, but perhaps it would be impossible even now for any degree to content me, or for any kind not to find favour in my eyes, if natural, and spontaneously betrayed. The want I felt, however, was just a twilight preparation of the faculties for the scene that followed.

The last silver medal had been carried from the table, the last white-robed nymph had sought her seat with the ribbon streaking her drapery, when both the choral forces rose and

sang together the welcome in more exciting fulness. And then they all sat down, and a murmur of voices and motion began to roll on all sides, as if some new part were to be played over.

The band arose on either side, and after a short differential pause, as if calling attention to something, commenced with perfect precision Weber's "Jubel" overture. It was my companion who told me its name, whispering it into my ear; and I listened eagerly, having heard of its author in every key of praise.

I did not much care for the effect, though it was as cool as needed to be after those cool proceedings. I dearly wanted to ask him whether he loved it, but it was unnecessary; for I could see it was even nothing to him by his face. He seemed passing judgment proudly, furtively, on all that chanced around him, and I could not but feel that he searched all, governed all with his eye from that obscure corner.

Immediately on the conclusion of the overture, several professors left the table, and clustered round the pianoforte. One opened it, and then Milans-André approached, and waving his creamy gloves, unclothed his hands, and stood at the front of the platform. Some boisterous shouts arose; they began near his station, and were imitated from the middle benches, but there was an undemonstrative coldness even in these; they seemed from the head, not the heart, as one might say. The artist did not appear distressed; indeed, he looked too classically self-reliant to require encouragement.

He was what might be called extremely handsome. There was a largeness about his features that would have told well in a bust—they were perfectly finished; also a Phidias could not have planed another polish on the most oval nostril, a Canova could not have pumiced unparted lips to more appropriate curve. His eyes were too far for me to search, but I did not long to come at their full expression. He stood elegantly, while the plaudits made their way among the muffling leaves, and therein went to sleep; the golden flowers of the lindens hung down withering, smitten by the terror of his presence! My companion—to my surprise, my bewilderment even—applauded also, but, as it were, mechanically; he stood beside me on that topmost tier applauding, but his eyes were still fixed upon the roof. I heard his voice among the others, and it was just at that instant that some one, and *that* some one in a professor's robe, a gentleman of sage demeanour, started from one of the lower tiers, and looked

back suddenly at him; as suddenly fired, flushed, lighted, all over his face, wise and grave as it was. *He* saw not, still rapt, still looking upwards; but I saw and felt, felt certain of the impression received. A sort of whisper crept along the tier—a portentous thrill; one and another—all—turned, and, before I could gather with my glance who had left them, several seats were voided beneath us.

In a few minutes I heard a long and silver thundering chord. I knew it was the reveille of the wonderful Milans-André, but so many persons were standing and running that I could not see, and could scarcely hear. Soon all must have heard less. As the keys continued to flash in unmitigated splendour, a rushing noise seemed arising also from the floor to the ceiling; it was, indeed, an earnest of my own pent-up enthusiasm that could not be repressed, for I found myself shouting, hurrahing, beneath my breath, as all did around me. I was not mistaken; some one opened the door by which we had entered, gustily, violently—and drew my companion away; before I thought of losing him, he was gone; I knew not whether led or carried; I knew not whether aroused, or in the midst of his high abstraction.

I pressed downwards, climbing over the benches, driving my way among those who stood, that I might see all as well as feel; but at length I stood upon a seat, and beheld what was worth beholding, is bright to remember, but, oh! how hopeless to record. Just so might a painter dream to pour upon his canvas an extreme effect of sunset; those gorgeous effusions of golden flame and blinding roses that are dashed into dazzling mist before our hearts have gathered them to us, have made them, in beauty so blazingly serene, our own.

The sound of the keys so brilliant, grew dulled as by a tempest voice in distance; not alone the hurrahs, the vivas, but the stir, the crash of the dividing multitude. And before almost I could believe it, I beheld moving through the cloven crowd that slight and unembarrassed form; but he seemed alone to move as if urged by some potent necessity, for his head was carried loftily, and there was not the shadow of a smile upon his face.

It was evident that the people, between pressing and thronging, were determined to conduct him to the platform; and it struck me, from his hasty step and slightly troubled air, that he longed to reach it for calm to be restored. Milans-André, meantime—will it be believed?—continued playing, and

scarcely raised his eyes as my conductor at length mounted the steps, and seemed to my sight to shrink among those who now stood about him. But it was hopeless to restore the calm. I knew that from the first. He had no sooner trodden the elevation than a burst of joyous welcome, that drowned the keys—that drenched the very ear—forced the pianist to quit his place. No one looked at him of young or old, except those who had confronted him at the table. They surrounded him, some with smiles and eager questions; some with provoking gravity. The other was left alone to stem, as it were, that tide of deafening acclaim; he slightly compressed his lip, made a slight motion forwards; he lifted his hand with the slight deprecation that modesty or pride might have suggested alike—still hopelessly. The arrears of enthusiasm demanded to be paid with interest, the trampings, the shower-like claps, the shouts—only deepened, widened tenfold; the multitude became a mob, and frantic—but with a glorious zeal! Some tore handfuls of the green adorning the pillars, and passing it forward, it was strewn on the steps. From the galleries hung the excited children, girls and boys, and dividing their bouquets, rained the roses upon his head, that floated, crimson and pink, and pearly, to the green floor beneath his feet. With a sort of delicate desperation he shook his hair from those dropped flowers, and, for one instant, hid his face; the next, flung down his hands, and smiled a flashing smile; so that, from lip to brow, it was as if some sunbeam fluttered in the cage of a rosy cloud—smiling above, below, and everywhere it seemed—ran round the group of professors to the piano, and without seating himself, without prelude, began a low and hymn-like melody.

Oh! that you had heard the lull, like a dream dying, dissolving from the awakening brain—the deep and tremendous, yet living and breathing stillness—that sank upon each pulse of that enthusiasm raised and fanned by him, and by him absorbed and hidden to brood and be at rest!

I know not which I felt the most, the passion of that almost bursting heart of silence, as it were, rolled together into a purple bud from its noon-day efflorescence by the power that had alone been able to unsheathe its glories—or that stealing, creeping People's Song, that in few and simple chords, beneath one slender, tender pair of hands, held bound, as it were, and condensed in one voice the voice of myriads. For myself, I writhed with bliss, I was petrified into desolation by delight;

but I was not singular on that occasion, for those around me seemed alone to live, to breathe, that they might receive and retain those few precious golden notes, and learn those glorious lineaments, so pale, so radiant with the suddenly starting hectic, as his hands still stirred the keys to a fiercer inward harmony than that they veiled by touch.

It was not long, that holy People's Song—I scarcely think it lasted five minutes, certainly not more; but the effect may be better conceived, and the power of the player appreciated, when I say not one note was lost: each sounded, rang almost hollow, in the intense pervading silence.

"It is over," I thought, as he raised those slender hands, after a rich reverberating pause on the final chord, swelling with dim arpeggios on the harmony as into the extreme of vaulting distance—"it is over; and they will make that dreadful noise unless he plays again." Never have I been so mistaken; but how could I anticipate aught of him? For as he moved he fixed his eyes upon the audience, so that each individual must have felt the glance within his soul—so seemed to feel it; for it expressed a command sheathed in a supplication, unearthly, irresistible, that the applause should not be renewed.

There was perfect stillness, and he turned to Milans-André and spoke. Every one beneath the roof must have heard his words, for they were distinct as authoritatively serene. "Will you be so good as to resume your seat?" And as if swayed by some angel power—such as drove the ass of Balaam to the wall—the imperial pianist sat down, flushed and rather ruffled, but with a certain pomp it was trying to me to witness; and recommenced the concerto which had been so opportunely interrupted. Attention seemed restored, so far as the ear of the multitude was concerned, but every eye wandered to him who now stood behind the player, and turned the leaves of the composition under present interpretation. *He* seemed attentive enough; not the slightest motion of his features betrayed an unsettled thought. His eyes were bent proudly, but calmly, upon the page; the rose light had faded from his cheek as the sunset flows from heaven into eternity—but how did he feel? Hopeless to record, because hopeless to imagine. Perhaps nothing; the triumph so short but bright had no doubt become such phantasm as an unnoticeable yesterday, to one whose future is fraught with expectation.

The concerto was long and elaborately handled. I felt I really should have admired it, have been thereby instructed,

had not *he* been there. But there is something grotesque in talent when genius, even in repose, is by. It is as the splendour of a festive illumination, when the sun is rising upon the city; that brightness of the night turns pale and sick, while the celestial darkness is passing away into day. There was an oppression upon all that I heard, for something different had unprepared me for anything, everything, except something else like itself. The committee were again at the table, and when I grew weary of the second movement, I looked for my master, and found him exactly opposite; but certainly not conscious of me. His beard was delightfully trimmed, and his ink-black eyebrows were just as usual; but I had never seen such an expression as that with which he regarded the *one*. It was as if a stone had rolled from his heart, and it had begun to beat like a child's; it was as if his youth were renewed, like the eagle's; it was as if he were drinking, silently but deeply, celestial knowledge from those younger heavenly eyes. "Does he love him so well, then?" thought I!—oh! that I had known it, Aronach, for then I should have loved you, have found you out. But of course you don't think we are worthy to partake such feeling, and I don't know but that you are right to keep it from us. "Would that concerto never be over?" was my next surmise—it was about the longest process of exhaustion to which I had ever been subjected. As for me, I yawned until I was dreadfully ashamed; but when I bethought myself to look round, lo! there were five or six just out of yawns as well, and a few who had passed that stage and closed their eyes. It never struck me as unconscionable that we should tire, when we might gaze upon the face of him who had shown himself ready to control us all; indeed, I do believe that had there been nothing going on, no concerto, no Milans-André, but that he had stood there silent, just as calm and still—we should never have wearied the whole day long of feeding upon the voiceless presence, the harmony unresolved. But do you not know, oh, reader! the depression, the protracted suffering occasioned by the contemplation of any work of art—in music, in verse, in colour, or in form—that is presented to us as model, that we are coaxed to admire, and enticed to appreciate after we have accidentally but immediately beforehand experienced one of those ideal sensations, that, whether awakened by Nature, by Genius, or by Passion suddenly elated, claim and condense our enthusiasm, so that we are not aware of its existence except on a renewal of that same sensation so

suddenly dashed away from us as our sober self returns, and our world becomes again to-day, instead of that eternal something—new, not vague, and hidden but not lost?

CHAPTER XXIX

So absorbed was I, either in review or reverie, that I felt not when the concerto closed, and should have remained just where I was, had not the door swung quietly behind me. I saw who beckoned me from beyond it, and was instantly with him. He had divested himself of his cloak, and seemed ready rather to fly than to walk, so light was his frame, so elastic were his motions. He said, as soon as we were on the stairs—

“I should have come for you long ago, but I thought it was of no use until such time as I could find something you might eat; for, Carlomein, you must be very hungry. I have caused you to forego your dinner, and it was very hard of me; but if you will come with me, you shall have something good, and see something pretty.”

“I am not hungry, Sir,” I of course replied; but he put up his white finger—

“I am, though; please to permit me to eat! Come this way.”

He led me along a passage on the ground-floor of the entrance hall, and through an official-looking apartment to a lively scene indeed. This was a room without walls, a sort of garden-chamber leading to the grounds of the Academy, now crowded; for the concerto had concluded, with the whole performance, and the audience had dispersed immediately, though not by the way we came, for we had met no one. Pillars here and there upheld the roof, which was bare to the beams, and also dressed with garlands. Long tables were spread below, all down the centre, and smaller ones at the sides, each covered with beautiful white linen, and decked with fluttering ribbons and little knots of flowers. Here piles of plates and glasses, coffee-cups and tureens, betokening the purport of this pavilion; but they were nothing to the baskets trimmed with fruits, the cakes, and fancy bread, the masses of sweetmeat in all imaginable preparation. The middle of the largest table was built up with strawberries only, and a rill of cream poured from a silver urn into china bowls at the will of a serene young female

who seemed in charge. A great many persons found their way hither, and were crowding to the table, and the refreshing silence was only broken by the restless jingle of spoons and crockery. My guide smiled with a sprightly air.

"Come! we must find means to approach as well, for the strawberry pyramid will soon not have left one stone upon another."

I made way instantly to the table, and with no small difficulty smuggled a plate, and had it filled with strawberries. I abjured the cream, and so did he to whom I returned; but we began to wander up and down.

"Let me recommend you," said he, "a slice of white bread; it is so good with strawberries; otherwise you must eat some sausage, for that fruit will never serve alone; you might as well starve entirely, or drink dew-water."

"I don't see any bread," I answered, laughing; "it is all eaten."

"Oh, oh!" he returned, and with the air of Puck he tripped across the pavilion to a certain table from which the fair superintendent had flown. The ribbons and wreaths danced in the breeze, but the white linen was bare of a single loaf.

"I *must* have some bread for thee, Carlomein, and I, indeed, myself begin to feel the want unknown to angels."

Could this be the same, it struck me, who discoursed like an angel of that high throng? So animated was he; such a sharp brightness sparkled in his eyes.

"Somebody has run away with the loaf on purpose," he continued, with his dancing smile; "I saw a charming loaf as I came in, but then the strawberries put it out of my head, and lo! it is gone."

"I *will* get some bread!"—and off I darted out of the pavilion, he after me, and all eyes upon us.

It was a beautiful scene in the air; a lovely garden, not too trim, but diversified with mounds and tree-crowned slopes, all furnished with alcoves, or seats and tables. Here was a hum of voices, there a fragment of part-song scattered by a laugh, or hushed with reverent shyness as all arose, whether sitting or lying, to uncover the head as my companion passed. There were groups of ten or twelve, five or six, or two and two together; many sat upon the grass, itself so dry and mossy; and it was upon one of these parties, arranged in half Elysian, half gipsy style, that my companion fixed his thrilling eyes.

He darted across the grass. "I have it! I see it!" and I

was immediately upon his footsteps. These were all ladies; and as they wore no bonnets, they could not uncover, but at the same time they were not conscious of our approach at first. They made a circle, and had spread a linen cloth upon the fervid floor: each had a plate, and almost every one was eating, except a young girl in the very middle of the ring. She was dispensing, slice by slice, our missing bread-cake. But I did not look farther, for I was lost in observing my guide; not understanding his expression, which was troubled and fallen, while his light tones shook the very leaves. "Ah! the thieves! the rogues! to steal the bread from our very mouths. Did I not know where I should find it? You cannot want it all: give us one slice, only one little slice! for we are starving, as you do not know, and beggars as you cannot see, for we look like gentlemen."

I never shall forget the effect of his words upon the little group; all were scared and scattered in a moment, all except the young lady who held the loaf in her lap. I do not say she stirred not, on the contrary, it was the impulsive grace of her gesture, as she swayed her hand to a little mound of moss by her side, just deserted, that made me start and turn to see her, that turned me from *his* face a moment. "Ah! who art thou?" involuntarily sounded in my yet unaverted ear. He spoke as if to me, but how could I reply? I was lost as he, but in far other feelings than his; at least I thought so, for I was surprised as his ejaculatory wonder.

"I will cut some bread for you, Sir, if you will condescend to sit," said a voice, which was as that of a child at its evening prayer, so full it was of an innocent *idlesse*; not *naïveté*, but differing therefrom as differs the lisp of infancy from the stammer of diffident manhood.

"I should like to sit; come also, Carlomein," replied my companion: and in defiance of all the etiquette of social Germany, which so defiantly breathes ice between the sexes, I obeyed. So did he his own intention; for he not only remained, but knelt on one knee, while, gazing with two suns in his eyes, he recalled the scattered company.

"Come back! come back!" he cried; "I order you!" and his silent smile seemed beckoning as he waved his elfin hand. One strayed forward, blushing through the hair; another disconcerted; and they all seemed sufficiently puzzled.

The gathering completed, my conductor took up the basket, and peeped into every corner, laughed aloud, handed it about,

and stole no glance at the maiden president. I was watching her, though, for a mighty and thrilling reason, that to describe in any measure is an expectation most like despair. Had she been his sister, the likeness between them had been more earthly—less appalling. I am certain it struck no one else present, and it probably might have suggested itself to no one anywhere besides, as I have since thought; but *me* it clove through heart and brain, like a two-edged sword whose temper is light instead of steel. So I saw and felt that she partook intimately, not alone of his nature, but of his inspiration; not only of his beauty, but his unearthly habit. And now, how to breathe in words the mystery that was never explained on earth! He was pure and clear, his brow like sun-flushed snow high lifted into light; her own dark if soft, and toned with hues of night from the purple under-deeps of her heavy braided hair. His features were of mould so rare that their study alone as models would have superseded by a new ideal the old fresh glories of the Greek marble world. Hers were flexibly inexpressive, all their splendour slept in uncharacteristic outline, and diffused themselves from her perfect eyes, as they awoke on her parted lips.

His eyes, so intense and penetrative, so wise and brilliant, with all their crystal calm and rousing fire, were as unlike hers as the sun in the diamond to the sun upon the lonely sea. In hers the blue green transparence seemed to serve alone as a mirror to reflect all hues of heaven; in his, the heaven within as often struggled with the paler show of paradise that Nature lent him in his exile. But if I spoke of the rest—of the traits that pierce only when the mere veiling loveliness is rent asunder—I should say it must ever bid me wonder to have discovered the divine fraternity in such genuine and artless symbol. It was as if the same celestial fire permeated their veins—the same insurgent longings lifted their very feet from the ground. The elfin hands of which I spoke were not more rare—were not more small and subtle than the little grasping fingers she extended to offer him the bread, and from which his own received it. Nor was there wanting in her smile the strange immortal sweetness that signalised his own; hers broke upon her parted lips like fragrance, the fragrance that *his* seemed to bear from the bursting buds of thought in the sunshine of inward fancy. But what riveted the resemblance most was the instancy of their sympathetic communion. While those around had quietly resumed their occupation, too busy to talk—though

certainly they might have been forgiven for being very hungry—he, no more kneeling, but rather lying than sitting, with his god-like head turned upwards to the sky, continued to accost her, and I heard all they said.

“I knew you again directly, you perceive, but you do not look so naughty now as you did in the school; you were even angry, and I cannot conceive why.”

“Cannot you, Sir?” she replied, without the slightest embarrassment. “I wonder whether *you* would like to be rewarded for serving music.”

“*It* rewards *us*, you cannot avoid its reward; but I agree with you about the silver and the gold. We will have no more medals.”

“They like them, Sir, those who have toiled for them; and who would not toil but for the promise of something to show.”

“And the blue ribbons are very pretty.”

“So is the blue sky, and they can neither give it us nor take it from us, nor can they our reward.”

“And that reward?” asked he.

“Is to suffer for its sake,” she answered.

He lifted his eyebrows in a wondering archness. “To suffer? To suffer, who alone enjoy, and are satisfied, and glorify happiness above all others, and above all other things?”

“Not all suffer, only the faithful; and to suffer is not to sorrow, and of all joy the blossom-sorrow prepares the fruit.”

“And how old are you whose blossom-sorrow I certainly cannot find in any form upon your maiden presence?”

“You smile, and seem to say, ‘Thou hast not yet *lived* the right to speak—purchased by experience the freedom of speech.’ I am both young and old. I believe I am younger than any just here, and I know more than they all do.”

“Was it pride,” thought I, “that curled beneath those tones so flowery soft?” for there was a lurking bitterness I had not found in *him*.

“Not younger than this one;” he took my hand and spread it across his knee. “These fingers are to weave the azure ribbon next.”

“He is coming, I know; but is not come. His name is upon the books. I hope he will not be an out-Cecilian, because I should like to know him, and we cannot know very well those who do not reside within the walls.”

“He is one of my very friendly ones. Will you also be very friendly with him?”

"I always will. Be friendly now!" and she smiled upon me an instant, very soon letting fall her eyes, in which I then detected a Spanish droop of the lids, though, when raised, her glance dispelled the notion, for the brightness there shone all unshorn by the inordinate length of the lashes, and I never saw eyes so light with lashes so defined and dark.

"So, Sir, this azure ribbon which you admire is also to be woven for him?" she continued, as if to prolong the conversation.

"Not if symbols are to be the order of the day, for, Carlotto, your colour is not *blue*."

"No, Sir; it is violet, you said."

"We say *blue violets*."

"Yes, Sir," she responded quickly. "So we say the blue sky at night; but how different at night and by day! The violet holds the blue, but also that deeper soul by the blue alone made visible. All sounds seem to sleep in one, when that is the violin."

"You are speaking too well, it makes me afraid you will be disappointed," I said in my first surprise. Then, feeling I had blundered—"I mean in me."

"That would make no difference. Music is, and is eternal. We cannot add one moment to its eternity, nor by our inaptitude diminish the proper glory of our art. Is it not so, Sir?" she inquired of him.

Like a little child somewhat impatient over a morning lesson, he shook his hair back and sprung upon his feet.

"I wish you to show me the garden before I go; is this where you walk? And where is the Raphael?"

"That is placed in the conservatory, by order of Monsieur Milans-André."

"Monsieur myself will have it moved. Why in the conservatory, I wonder? It should be *at home*, I think."

"It does look very well there to-day, as it is hung with its peculiar garland—the white roses."

"Yes, the angel-roses. Oh, come! see! let us go to the angel-roses!" and he ran down the bank of grass, and over the lawn among the people.

I was very much surprised at his gleeful impatience, not knowing a whit to what they alluded, and I only marvelled that no one came to fetch him; that we were suffered so long to retain him. We followed; I not even daring to look at the girl who had so expressed herself in my hearing, as to make me

feel there were others who also *felt*; and turning the corner of the pavilion, we came into the shadow of a lovely walk, planted and arched with lindens. It ran from a side door of the school-house to an indefinite distance. We turned into this grove, and there again we found him.

"How green! how ravishing!" he exclaimed, as the sun-sprent shadows danced upon the ground. "Oh! that scent of scents, and sweetest of all sweetnesses, the linden flower! You hold with me there, I think?"

"Yes, entirely; and yet it seems just sweet enough to promise, not to be, all sweetness."

"I do not hold with you there! All that is sweet we cherish for itself, or I do, and I could not be jealous of any other sweetness, when one sweetness filled up my soul."

"Yes," I thought; but I did not express it, even to myself, as it now occurs to me—"that is the difference between your two temperaments." And so indeed it was; *he* aspired so high that he could taste all sweetness in every sweetness, even here: *she*—younger, weaker, frailer—could only lose herself between the earth and heaven, and dared not cherish any sweetness to the utmost, while here unsafely wandering.

"And this conservatory, how do you use it?"

"We do not use it generally; we may walk round it; but on state occasions refreshments are served there to our professors and their friends. I dare say it will be so to-day."

"There will be people in there, you mean? In that case I think I shall remain, and sun myself on the outside. You, Carlomien, shall go in and look at the picture for me."

"Is it a picture, Sir? But I cannot see it for you; I should be afraid. I wish you would come in, sir!"

"Ah! I know why! You are frightened lest Aronach should pounce upon you; is it not?"

I laughed.

"A little, Sir."

"Well, in that case I *will* come in. It does look inviting—pretty room!" We stopped at the conservatory door. It was rather large, and very long; a table down the centre was dressed with flowers, and overflowing dishes decked the board. There were no seats, but a narrow walk ran round, and over this the foreign plants were grouped richly, and with excelling taste. The roof was not curtained with vine-leaves, as in England, but it was covered with the immense leaves and ivory-yellow blossoms of the magnolia grandiflora, which made the

small arched space appear expanded to immensity by the largeness of its type, and gave to all the exotics an air of home.

At the end of the vista, some thirty feet in length, there were several persons all turned from us; and, as we crept along, one by one, until we reached that end, the odours of jasmin and tuberose were heavy upon every breath. I felt as if I must faint until we attained that point where a cool air entered; refreshing, though itself just out of the hottest sunshine I had almost ever felt. This breeze came through arched doors on either hand half open, and met in two embracing currents where the picture hung. All were looking at the picture, and I instantly refrained from criticism. It was hung by invisible cords to the framework of the conservatory, and thence depended. About it, and around it clustered the deep purple bells and exquisite tendrils and leaves of the maurandia, while the scarlet passion flower met it above, and mingled its mystic splendours. Other strange glories, but for me nameless, pressing underneath, shed their glowing smiles from fretted urns or vases; but around the frame, and so close to the picture as to hide its other frame entirely, lay the cool white roses, in that dazzling noon so seeming, and amidst those burning colours. The picture itself was divine as painting can render its earthly ideal, so strictly significant of the set rules of beauty. All know the "St. Cecilia" of Raphael d'Urbino; this was one of the oldest copies, and was the greatest treasure of the committee, having been purchased for an extravagant sum by the president, from the funds of the foundation—a proceeding I did not clearly comprehend, but was too ignorant to tamper with. It was the young lady who enlightened me as I stood by her side. Of those who stood there, I concluded the most part had already refreshed themselves; they held plates or glasses, and in a few moments first one and then another recognised our companion, and that with a reverential impressiveness it charmed me to behold. It may have been the result of his exquisitely bright and simple manner, for he had wholly put aside the awful serene reserve that had controlled the crowd in public. Milans-André happened to be there; I beheld him now, and also saw that taking hold upon that arm I should not have presumed to touch, he drew on our guide as if away from us. But this one stayed, and resting his hand upon the table, inquired with politeness for a court:

"Where is your wife? Is she here to-day? I want to show her to a young gentleman."

Milans-André looked down upon him; for he was quite a head taller, though not tall himself. "She is here, but not in here. I left her with the Baroness Silberung. Come and see her indoors. She will be highly flattered."

"No; I am not coming! I have two children to take charge of. Where is Professor Aronach?"

"In the committe-room, and in a great rage. With you, too, it appears, Chevalier."

"With me, is it? I am so glad."

He stepped back to us.

"I do not believe that any one can make him so angry as I can! It is charming, Carlomein!"

Oh, that name! that dear investment! how often it thrilled me and troubled me with delight, that day.

"I suppose, Sir, I have something to do with it."

Before he could reply, Milans-André had turned back, and with scornful complacency awaited him near a glass dish of ices dressed with ice-plant. He looked revengeful, too, as he helped himself; and on our coming up, he said, "Do you eat nothing, Chevalier?" while filling a plate with the pink-frozen strawberry.

"Oh, I could eat it, if I would; for who could resist that rose-coloured snow? But I have no time to eat; I must go find Aronach, for I dreamed I should find him here."

"My dear Chevalier! drink then with me?"

"In Rhine wine? Oh, yes; mein Herr Professor! and let us drink to all other professors and chevaliers in ourselves represented."

The delicately caustic tones in which he spoke were, as it were, sheathed by the unimpeachable grace of his demeanour, as he snatched first one, and then another, and the third, of three tall glasses, and filling them from the tapering bottle to the brim, presented one to the lovely girl who had screened herself behind me, one to myself, and the third to himself; all the while regarding Milans-André, who was preparing his own, with a mirthful expression, still one of the very sweetest that could allure the gaze.

When André looked up, he turned a curious paleness, and seemed almost stoned with surprise. I could neither understand the one thing nor the other; but after our pledge, which we two heartily responded to, my maiden companion gave me a singular beckoning nod, which, for the instant, reminded me of Miss Lawrence, and at the same time moved and stood

four or five steps away. I followed to the pomegranate plant.

"Come even closer," she whispered, "for I dare say you are curious about those two."

If she had not been, as she was, most unusually beautiful to behold, I should dearly have grudged her that expression—"those two;" but she constrained me by her sea-blue eyes to attentive silence.

"You see what a power has the greater one over the other. I have never seen *him* before, but my brother has told me about him; besides, here he is worshipped, and no wonder. The Cecilia School was founded by one Gratianos, a *Bachist*, about forty years ago, but not to succeed all at once of course; the foundations were too poor, and the intentions too sublime. Louis Spohr's works brought us first into notice, because our students distinguished themselves at a certain festival four years ago. The founder died about that time, and had not Milans-André put himself in the way to be elected president, we should have gone to nothing; but he was rich, and wanted to be richer, so he made of us a speculation, and his name was sufficient to fill the classes from all parts of Europe. But we should have worse than gone to nothing soon, for we were slowly crystallising into the same order as certain other musical orders that shall not be named, for perhaps you would not know what I mean by quoting them."

"I could, if you would explain to me, and I suppose you mean the music that is studied is not so select as it should be."

"That is quite enough to the purpose," she proceeded, with quite an adult fluency. "About three months ago we gave a great concert. The proceeds were for enlarging the premises, and we had a great crowd, not in the room we used to-day, which is new, but in the large room we shall now keep for rehearsals. After the concert, which André conducted, and at which all the prodigies assisted, the conductor read us a letter. It was from one we had all heard of, and whom many of us loved secretly, and dared not openly, for reasons sad and many—from the 'Young Composer,' as André satirically chose to call him, the Chevalier Seraphael."

"Oh!" I cried, "is that his name? What a wonderful name! It is like an angel to be called Seraphael."

"Hush! none of that now, because I shall not be able, perhaps, to tell you what I want you to know before you come here. Seraphael had just refused the post of Imperial pianist,

which had been pressed upon him very earnestly, and the reason he gave for refusing it certainly stands alone in the annals of artistic policy:—that there was only one composer living to whom the office of Imperial pianist should be confided, and by whom it must be assumed—Milans-André himself. Then it went on to insinuate that by exclusive exchange only could such an arrangement be effected: in short, that Milans-André, who must not go out of Austria, should be prevailed upon, in that case, to resign the humble position that detained him here to the young composer himself. Now Milans-André did resign, as you may suppose; but they say, not without a *douceur*, and we presented him with a gold beaker engraved with his own arms, when he retired—that was not the *douceur*, mind; he had a benefit.”

“That means a concert with all the money it brought for himself. But why did you not see the Chevalier until to-day?”

“Some of ours did—the band and the chorus—but I do not belong to either. You have no idea what it is to serve music under Milans-André; and when *he* came to-day, we all knew what it meant, who were wishing for a new life. It was a sort of electric snapping of our chains when he played to-day.”

“With that Volkslied?”

“Yes,” she responded, with tremulous agitation; “with that Volkslied. Who shall say he does not know all hearts?”

“But it is not a Burschen song, nor like one; it is like nothing else.”

“No, thank God! a song for the women as well as the men. You never heard such tones, nor I. Well it was that we could put words to them, everybody there.”

“And yet it was a song without words,” said a voice, so gentle that it stole upon my imagination like a sigh.

“Oh, Sir! is it you?”

I started, for he was so near to us, I was afraid he might have been vexed by hearing. But *she* was unchanged, unruffled as a flower of the conservatory by the wind without. She looked at him full, and he smiled into her very eyes.

“I only heard your very last words. Do not be afraid! for I knew you were talking secrets, and that is a play I never stop. But, Carlomein, when you have played your play, I must carry you to your master, whom I might call *ours*, and beg his pardon for all my iniquities.”

“Oh, sir! as if you needed,” I said; but the young lady answered—

"I shall retreat, then, Sir; and indeed this is not my place."

She curtseyed lowly as to a monarch, but without a shadow of timidity, or so much as the flutter of one rose-leaf, and passed out among the flowers, he looking after her—strangely, wistfully.

"Is not that a Cecilia, Carlomein?"

"If you think so, Sir."

"You do not think it? You ought to know as well as I. As she is gone, let us go."

And lightly as she fled, he turned back to follow her. But we had lost her when we came into the garden. As he passed along, however, also among the flowers, he touched first one and then another of the delicate plants abstractedly until at length he pulled off one blossom of an eastern jasmine—a beautiful specimen, white as his own forehead, and of perfume sweetest next his breath.

"Oh!" said he, gaily, "I have bereaved the soft sisterhood; but," he added, earnestly, as he held the pale blossom between his fairest fingers, "I wonder whether they are unhappy so far from home. I wonder whether they *know* they are away!"

"I should think not, Sir, or they would not blossom so beautifully."

"That is nothing, and no reason, oh, Carlomein! for I have seen such a beautiful soul that was away from home, and it was very homesick; yet it was so fair, so very fair, that it would put out the eye of this little flower."

I could not help saying, or quickly murmuring rather, "It must be your soul then, Sir."

"Is it mine to thee? It is to me another—but that does not spoil thy pretty compliment."

I never heard tones so sweet, so infantine. But we had reached the door of the glass chamber, and I then observed that he was gazing anxiously—certainly with inquiry—at the sky. At that moment it first struck me that since our entrance beneath the shadowy greenness, the sun had gone in. Simultaneously a shade, as from a springing cloud, had fallen upon that brilliant countenance. We stepped out into the linden grove, and then it came upon me, indeed, that the heavens were dulled, and a leaden languor had seized upon the fresh young foliage. Both leaves and yellow blossom hung wearily in the gloom, and I felt the intense lull that precedes an electric shower. I looked at him. He was entirely pale, and the soft lids of his eyes had dropped—their lights had gone in like the

sun. His lips seemed to flutter, and he spoke with apprehensive agitation.

"I think it will rain, but we cannot stay in the conservatory."

"Sir, it will be dry there," I ventured.

"No, but if it should thunder."

At the very instant the western cloudland, as it were, shook with a quivering flash, though very far off: for the thunder was indeed but a mutter several minutes afterwards. But he seemed stricken into stillness, and moved not from the trees at the entrance of the avenue.

"Oh! Sir," I cried, I could not help it—I was in such dread for him—"do not stand under the trees. It is a very little way to the house, and we can run."

"Run, then," he answered, sweetly. "But I cannot; I never could stir in a storm."

"Pray, Sir, oh! pray come!"—the big drops were beginning to prick the leafy calm—"and you will take cold too, Sir. Oh! come."

But he seemed as if he could scarcely breathe. He pressed his hands on his brow, and hid his eyes. I thought he was going to faint; and, under a vague impression of fetching assistance, I rushed down the avenue.

CHAPTER XXX

I CAN never express my satisfaction when, two or three trees from the end, I met the magic maiden herself, all hooded, and carrying an immense umbrella.

"Where is this Chevalier of yours?" she asked me, with eagerness. "You surely have not left him alone in the rain?"

"I was coming for you," I cried: for such was, in fact, the case. But she noticed not my reply, and sped fleetly beneath the now weeping trees. I stood still—the rain streaming upon my head, and the dim thunder every now and then bursting and dying mournfully, yet in the distance, when I heard them both behind me. How astonished was I! I turned, and joined them. They were talking very fast—the strange girl having her very eyes fixed on the threatening sky, at which she laughed. He was not smiling, but seemed borne along by some impulse he could not resist, and was even unconscious of; he held the umbrella above them both, and she cried to me to

come also beneath the canopy. We had only one clap as we crossed the lawn—now reeking and deserted; but a whole levée was in the refreshment pavilion waiting for the monarch. So many professors robed—so many Cecilians with their badges—that I was ready to shrink into a nonentity, instead of feeling myself, by my late privilege, superior to all. Every person appeared to turn as we made our way. But for all the clamour, I heard him whisper, “You have done with me what no one ever did yet; and oh! I do thank you for being so kind to the foolish child. But come with me that I may thank you elsewhere.”

“I would rather stay, Sir. Here is my place, and I went out of my place to do you that little service, of which it is out of the question to speak.”

“You must not be proud. Is it too proud to be thanked, then?”

With the gentlest grace he held out to her the single jasmine blossom. “See, no tear has dropped upon it. Will you take its last sigh?”

She drew it down into her hand, and, almost as airily as he moved, glided in among the crowd, which soon divided us from her.

Seraphael himself sighed so very softly that none could have *heard* it; but I saw it part his lips, and heave his breast.

“She does not care for me, you see,” he said, in a sweet, half pettish manner, as we left the pavilion.

“Oh! Sir, because she does not come with you? That is the very reason, because she cares so much.”

“How do you make that out?”

“I remember the day I brought you that water, sir, how I was afraid to stay, although I would have given everything to stay and look at your face; and I ran away so fast because of that.”

“Oh, Carlomein! hush! or you must make me vain. I wonder very much why you do like me; but, pray, let it be so.”

“Like you!” I exclaimed, as we moved along the corridor, “you are *all* music—you must be, for I knew it before I had heard you play.”

“They do say so. I wonder whether it is true,” said he, laughing a bright, sudden laugh—as brightly sounding as his smile was bright to gaze on. “We shall all know some time,

I suppose. Now, Carlomein, what am I to say to this master of yours about you? for here we are at the door, and there is he inside."

"Pray, Sir, say what you like, and nothing if you like, for I don't care whether he storms or not."

"Storms is a very fine word, but, like our thunder, I expect it will go off very quietly. How kind it was not to thunder and lighten much, and to leave off so soon!"

"Oh! I am so glad. I hate thunder and lightning."

"Do you? and yet you ran for me. Thank you for another little lesson."

He turned and bowed to me, not mockingly, but with a sweet, grave humour. He opened the door at that moment, and I went in behind him. The very first person I saw was Aronach, sitting, as if he never intended to move again, in a great wooden chair, writing in a long book; while other attentive worthies looked over his shoulder. His eyes were down, and my companion crept round the room next the wall as noiselessly as a walking shadow. Then behind the chair, and putting up his finger to those around, he embraced with one arm the chair's stubborn back, and stretched the other forwards, spreading his slender hand out wide into the shape of some pink, clear fan-shell, so as to intercept the view Aronach had of his long book, and that unknown writing.

"Der Teufel!" growled Aronach, "dost thou suppose I don't know thy hand among a thousand? But thy pranks won't disturb me any more now than they did of old. Take it off, then, and thyself too."

"Oh, I dare say; but I won't go. I want to show thee a sight, father Aronach."

He then drew *my* arm forwards, and held my hand by the wrist, as by a handle, just under Aronach's nose. He looked indeed now; and so sharply, snappishly, that I thought he would have bitten my fingers, and felt very nervous. Seraphael broke into one of his laughter chimes, but still dangled my member; and when Aronach really saw my phiz, he no longer snapped nor roused up grandly, but sank back impotent in that enormous chair. He winked indeed furiously, but his eyes did not flash, so I grew still in my own mind, and thought to speak to him first. I said, somehow, and never thinking a creature was by, except that companion of mine—

"Dear Master, I would not have come without your leave. But you know very well I could not refuse this gentleman,

because he is a friend of yours, and you said yourself we must all obey him."

"Whippersnapper and dandiprat! I never said such words to *thee*. I regard him too much to inform such as thou with obedience. Thou hast, I can see very clearly, made away with all his spirit by thy frivolities, and I especially commend thee for dragging such as he up the hill in this heat. There are no such things as coaches in the Kell Platz, I suppose, or have the horses taken a holiday too?"

"Stop, stop, Aronach! for though I am a little boy," said the other, "I am bigger than he, and I brought him, not he me; and I dragged him hither too, for I don't like your coaches. And it is I who ought to beg pardon for taking him from work he likes so much better than any play, as he told me. But I did want to walk with him, that I might ask him about my English friends, with whom he is better acquainted than I am. He does know them, oh, so well! and had so many interesting anecdotes!"

At the utterance of this small white fib I was almost in fits; but he still went on—

"I know I have done very wrong, and I was an idle boy to tempt him, but you yourself could not help playing truant to-day; and, dearest master"—here his sweet, sweet voice was retrieved from the airy gaiety—"do let me come back with you to-day, and have a story-telling. You have not told me a story for a sad long time."

"If you come back, Chevalier, and if we are to get back before bed-time, I would have you go along and rest, if you can, until I shall be free; for I shall never empty my hands while you are by."

Aronach did not say "thou" here, I noticed, and his voice was even courteous, though he still preserved his stateliness. Like a boy, indeed, Seraphael laid hold of my arm, and pulled me from the room again. I cannot express the manly indignation of the worthies we left in there at such sportiveness. They all stood firm, and in truth they *were* all older, both in body and soul, than we. But no sooner were we outside than he began to laugh, and he laughed so that he had to lean against the wall. I laughed too; it was a most contagious spell.

"Now, Carl," he said, "very Carlomein! we will make a tour of discovery. I declare I don't know where I am, and am afraid to find myself in the young ladies' bedrooms. But I want to see how things are carried on here."

We turned this way and that way; he running down all the passages, and trying the very doors; but these were all locked.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, vivaciously, "they are, I suppose, too fine;" and then we explored farther. One end of the corridor was screened by a large oaken door from another range of rooms, and not without difficulty we effected an entrance, for the key, although in the lock, was rusty, and no joke to turn. Here, again, were doors, right and left; here also all was hidden under lock and key that they might be supposed to contain; but we did at last discover a curious hole at the end, which we did not take for a room until we came inside—having opened the door, which was latched, and not especially convenient. However, before we advanced, I had ventured, "Sir, perhaps some one is in there, as it is not fastened up."

"I shall not kill them, I suppose," he replied, with a curious eagerness. Then with the old sweetness, "You are very right, I will knock; but I know it will be knocking to nobody."

He had then touched the panel with his delicate knuckles; no voice had answered, and, with a mirthful look, he lifted the latch, and we both entered. It was a sight that surprised me; for a most desolate prison-cell could not have been darker. The window ought not to be so named; for it let in no light, only shade, through its lack-lustrous green glass. There was no furniture at all, except a very narrow bed—looking harder than Lenhart Davy's, but wearing none of that air of his. There was a closet, as I managed to discover in a niche, but no chest, no stove; in fact, there was nothing suggestive at all, except one solitary picture, and that hung above the bed, and looked down into it, as it were, to protect and bless. I felt I know not how when I saw it then and there; for it was—what picture do you think? A copy of the very musical cherub I had met with upon Aronach's wreath-hung walls. It was fresher, newer, in this instance, but it had no gold or carved frame; it was bound at its edge with fair blue ribbon only, beautifully stitched, and suspended by it too. Above the graceful tie was twisted one long branch of lately-gathered linden blossom, which looked itself sufficient to give an air of heaven to the close little cell; it was even as flowers upon a tomb—those sighs and smiles of immortality where the mortal has passed for ever!

"Oh, Sir!" I said, and I turned to him—for I knew his eyes were attracted thither—"oh, Sir! do you know whose portrait

that is? for my master has it, and I never dared to ask him; and the others do not know."

"It is a picture of the little boy who played truant, and tempted another little boy to play truant too."

And then, as he replied, I wondered I had not thought of such a possibility; for, looking from one to the other, I could not now but trace a certain definite resemblance between *those* floating baby ringlets and the profuse dark curls wherein the elder's strength almost seemed to hide: so small and infinitely spiritual was he in his incomparable organisation.

"Now, Sir, do come, and rest a little while before we go."

He was standing abstractedly by that narrow bed, and looked as sad, as troubled, as in the impending thunder-cloud; but he rallied just as suddenly:

"Yes, yes; we had better go, or she might come."

I could not reply: for this singular prescience daunted me—how could he tell it was *her* very room? But when we came into the corridor, I beheld, by the noonday brightness, which was not banished thence, that there was a kind of moist light in his eyes; not tears, but as the tearful glimmer of some blue distance when rain is falling upon those hills.

We threaded our way downstairs again—for he seemed quite unwilling to explore further—and I wondered where he would lead me next, when we met Milans-André in the hall. The Chevalier blushed even as an angry virgin on beholding him, but still met him cordially as before.

"Where are you staying, Chevalier? At the Fürstin Haus?"

"I am not staying here at all. I am going back to Lorbeerstadt to sleep, and to-morrow to Altenweg, and then to many places for many days."

"Oh! I thought you would have supped with me, and I could have a little initiated you. But if you are really returning to Lorbeerstadt, pray use my carriage, which is waiting in the yard."

"You are only too amiable, my dear André. We shall use it with the greatest pleasure."

Oh! how black did André look when Seraphael laid that small delicate stress upon the "we;" for I knew the invitation intended his colleague, and included no one else. But the other evidently took it all for granted; and, again thanking him with exquisite gaiety, ran out into the court-yard, and cried to me to come and see the carriage.

"I have a little coach myself," he said to me, and also to André, who was lounging behind along with us; "but it is a toy compared with yours, and I wonder I did not put it into my pocket—it is so small—only large enough for thee and me, Carlomein."

"Why, Seraphael, you are dreaming. There are no such equipages in all Vienna as your father's and mother's."

"They are not mine, you see; and if I drove such, I should look like a sparrow in a hencoop. Oh! Carlomein, what quantities of sparrows there are in London! Do they live upon the smuts?"

At this instant the carriage, whose driver André had beckoned to draw up, approached; and then we both ran to fetch Aronach, who came out very grumbling, for the entry in the long book was scarcely dry; and he saluted nobody, but marched after us like a person suddenly wound up, putting himself heavily into the carriage, which he did not notice in the least. It was an open carriage, Paris-built (as I now know), and so luxuriously lined as not to be very fit for an expedition in any but halcyon weather. As for Seraphael, he flung himself upon the seat as a cowslip ball upon the grass, and scarcely shook the light springs; and, as I followed him, he made a profound bow to the owner of the equipage, who, disconsolately enough, still stood within the porch.

"Now, I do enjoy this, Carlomein! I cannot help loving to be saucy to André—good, excellent, and wonderful as he is."

I looked to find whether he was in earnest. But I could not tell, for his eyes were grave, and the lips at rest. But Aronach gave a growl, though mildly—as the lion might growl in the day when a little child shall lead him.

"You have not conquered that weakness yet, and, I prophesy, never will."

"What weakness, Master?" But he faltered, even as a little child.

"To excuse fools, and fondle slaves."

"Oh, my Master! do not scold me"—and he covered his eyes with his little blue-veined hands. "It is so sad to be a fool or a slave, that we should do all for such we can do, especially if we are not so ourselves. I think myself right there."

His pleading tone here modulated into the still authority I had noticed once or twice, and Aronach gave a smile in reply,

which was the motion of the raptured look I had noticed during the improvisation.

"Thou teachest yet, then, out of thy vocation. But thou art no more than thou ever hast been—too much for thy old master. And as wrens fly faster, and creep stealthier than owls, so art thou already whole heavens beyond me."

But with tender scornfulness, Seraphael put out his hand in deprecation, and, throwing back his hair, buried his head in the cushion of the carriage, and shut his eyes. Nor did he again open them until we entered our little town.

I need scarcely say I watched him, and often, as in a glassy mirror, I see that face again upturned to the light—too beautiful to require any shadow, or to seek it—see again the dazzling day draw forth its lustrous symmetry, while ever the soft wind tried to lift those deep locks from the lucid temples, but tried in vain; what I am unable to picture to myself in so recalling being the ever restless smile that played and faded over the lips, while the closed eyes were feeding upon the splendours of the Secret. I shall never forget either, though, how they opened; and he came, as it were, to his childlike self again as the light carriage—light indeed for Germany—dashed round the Kell Platz, where its ponderous contemporaneous contradictions were ranged, and took the fountain square in an unwonted sweep. Then he sat forward and watched with the greatest eagerness, and he sprang out almost before we stopped.

"I think Carl and I could save you these stairs, Master mine," he exclaimed. "Let us carry you up between us!"

But what do you think was the reply? Seraphael had spoken in his gleeful voice. But Aronach wore his gravest frown as he turned and pounced suddenly upon the other—whipping him up in his arms, and hoisting him to his shoulder, then speeding up the staircase with his guest as if the weight were no greater than a flower or a bird! I could not stir some moments from astonishment and alarm, for I had instantaneous impressions of Seraphael flying over the balusters; but presently, when his laugh came ringing down—and I realised it to be the laugh of one almost beside himself with fun—I flew after them, and found them on the dark landing at the foot of our own flight. Seraphael was now upon his feet, and I quite appreciated the delicate policy of the old head here. He said in a moment, when his breath was steady—

"Now, if they offer to chair thee again at the Quartzmayne Festival, and thou turnest giddy-pate, send for me!"

"I certainly will, if they offer such an honour; but once is quite enough, and they will not do it again."

"Why not?"

"Because I fell into the river, and was picked up by a fisherman; and desiring to know my character after I was dead, I made him cover me with his nets, and row me down to Carstein, quite three miles. There I supped with him, and slept too, and the next morning heard that I was drowned."

"Oh! one knows that history, which found its way into a certain paper among the lies, and was published in illustration of the eccentricities of genius."

Aronach said this very cross; I wondered whether it was with the press or his pupil; but if it were with the latter, *he* only enjoyed it the more.

Then Aronach bade me conduct his guest into the organ-room, while he himself put a period to those howlings of the immured ones which yet conscientiously asserted themselves. We waited a few moments upstairs, and then Aronach carried off the Chevalier to his own room—a sacred region I had never approached, and which I could only suppose to exist. I then rushed to mine, and was so long in collecting my senses, that Starwood came to bid me to supper. I did not detain him then, though I had so much to say; but I observed that he had his Sunday coat on—a little blue frock, braided; and I remembered that I ought to have assumed my own. Still, my wardrobe was in such perfect order (thanks to Clo), that my own week coat was more respectable than many other boys' Sunday ones; and though I have the instinct of personal cleanliness very strong, I cannot say I like to look smart.

When I reached our parlour, I was quite dazzled. There was a sumptuous banquet, as I took it, arranged upon a cloth, the fineness and whiteness of which so far transcended our daily style, that I immediately apprehended it had proceeded from the secret hoards in that wonderful closet of Aronach's. The tall glasses were interspersed with silver flagons, and the usual garnishings varied by all kinds of fruits and flowers, which appeared to have sprung from a magic touch or two of that novel magic presence. For the rest, there were delicious milk porridge on our accounts, and honey and butter, and I noticed those long-necked bottles, one like which Santonio had emptied, and which I had never seen upon that table since—

for Aronach was very frugal, and taught us to be so. I was so from taste and by habit, but Iskar would have liked to gorge himself with dainties I used to think. When I saw this last seated at the table I was highly indignant, for he had set his stool by Seraphael's chair. He had fished from his marine store of clothes a crumpled white silk waistcoat, over which he had invested himself with a tarnished silver watch-chain. But I would not, if I could, recall his audacious manner of gazing over everything upon the table, and everybody in the room; with those legs of his stretched out for any one to stumble over, or rather, on purpose to make me stumble. I knew this very well, and avoided him by placing my stool on the opposite edge of the board, where I could still look into the eyes I loved if I raised my own.

This insignificant episode will prove that Iskar had not grown in my good graces, nor had I acquainted myself better with him than on the first night of my arrival. I knew him not—but I knew *of* him, for every voice in the house was against him, and he gave promise of no small power upon his instrument, together with small promise of musical or mental excellence; as all he did was correct to caricature and inimitably mechanical. Vain as he was of his playing, his vanity had small scope on that score under that quiet roof-shadow, so it spent itself upon his person, which was certainly elegant, if vulgar. I am not clear but that one of these personal attractions always infers the other. But why I mention Iskar is, that I may be permitted to recall the expressions with which our master's guest regarded him. It was a grieved, yet curious glance, with that child-like scrutiny of what is not true all abashing to the false, *unless* the false has lost all child-likeness. Iskar must, I suppose, have lost it, for he was not the least abashed, and was really going to begin upon his porridge before we had all sat down, if Aronach had not awfully, but serenely, rebuked him. Little Starwood, by my side, looked as fair and as pretty as ever, rather more shy than usual. Seraphael, now seated, looked round with that exquisitely sweet politeness I have never met with but in him, and asked us each whether we would eat some honey, for he had the honey-pot before him. I had some, of course, for the pleasure of being helped by him, and he dropped it into my milk in a gold flowing stream, smiling as he did so. It was so we always ate honey at Aronach's, and it is so I eat it to this day. Little Star put out his bowl too—oh! those great heavy

wooden bowls!—it was just too much for him, and he let it slip. Aronach was rousing to thunder upon him, and I felt as if the ceiling were coming down (for I knew he was angry on account of that guest of his), when we heard that voice in its clear authority—"Dear Aronach, do nothing! the milk is not spoiled." And turning all of us together, we saw that he had caught the bowl on his outstretched hands, and that not a drop had fallen. I mention it as illustrative of that miraculous organisation in which intent and action were simultaneous, the motions of whose will it seemed impossible to retard or anticipate. Even Iskar looked astonished at this feat; but he had not long to wonder, for Aronach sternly commended us to great haste in the disposal of our supper.

I needed no urging, for it was natural to feel that the master and his master must wish to be alone; indeed, I should have been thankful to escape eating, though I was very hungry, that I might not be in the way; but, directly I took pains to do away with what I had before me, I was forbidden by Aronach "to bolt."

I lay awake many hours in a vague excitement of imaginary organ sounds, welling up to heaven from heaven's under-springs. I languished in a romantic vision of that face, surrounded with cloud-angels, itself their out-shining light. I waited to hear his footsteps upon the stairs when he should at length depart; but so soft was that departing motion that even I, listening with my whole existence, heard it not, nor heard anything to remind my heart-silence that he had come and gone.

CHAPTER XXXI

I THINK I can relate nothing else of that softest month of summer, nor of sultry June. It was not until the last week I was to change my quarters; but, long as it seemed in coming, it came when I was hardly prepared for the transfer. Aronach returned to his stricter self again after that supper; but I felt certain he had heard a great deal after we had left the table, as an expression of softer character forsook not his eyes and smile for many days. I could not discover whether anything had passed concerning Starwood, who remained my chief anxiety, as I felt if I left him there alone, he would not get on at all. Iskar and I preserved our mutual distance, though I

would fain have been more often with him, for I wanted to make him out. He practised harder than ever, and hardly took time to eat and drink, and only on Sundays, a great while to dress. He was always very jauntily put together when we set out to church, and looked like a French manikin, but for his upper lip and the shallow width of his forehead. I thought him very handsome, while, yet so young, he was so; but his charm consisted for me in his being unapproachable, and, as I thought, mysterious.

We saw about as little of each other as it was possible to see, living in the same house, and dining in the same room; but we never talked at meals, we had no time.

It is but fair to allow myself an allusion to my violin, as it was becoming a very essential feature in my history. With eight hours' practice a day I had made some solid progress; but it did not convict me of itself yet, as I was not allowed to play, only to acquaint myself with the anatomy of special compositions, as exercises in theory. Iskar played so easily, and gave such an air of playing to practice, that it never occurred to me I was getting on, though it was so, as I found in time. At this era I hated the violin, just as pianoforte students hate the pianoforte during the period of apprenticeship to mechanism. I hated the sound that saluted me morning, noon, and night; I shrank from it ever unaccustomed, for the penetralia of my brain could never be rendered less susceptible by piercing and searching its recesses. I believe my musical perception was as sensitive as ever, all through this epidemic dislike, but I felt myself personally very musically indisposed. I could completely dissociate my ideal impression of that I loved from my absolute experience of what I served. I was patient, because waiting; content, because faithful; and I pleased myself albeit with reflecting that my violin—my own property—my very own—had a very different soul from that thing I handled and tortured every day, from which the soul had long since fled. For all the creators of musical forms have not power to place in them the soul that lives for ages, and a little wear and tear separates the soul from the body. As for my Amati, I knew its race so pure that I feared for it no premature decay. In its dark box I hoped it was at least not unhappy, but I dearly longed for a sight of it, and, had I dared, I would have crept into the closet, but that whenever it was unlocked I was locked up. The days flew, though they seemed to me so long, as ever in summer; and I felt how ravishing

must the summer be without the town. I wearied after it, and, although the features of German scenery are quite without a certain bloom I have only found in England, they have some mystic beauty of their own unspeakably more touching; and as I lived then, all life was a fairy-tale book, with half the leaves uncut. I was ever dreaming, but healthfully—the dreams forgotten as soon as dreamed—so it chanced that I can tell you nothing of all I learnt or felt, except what was tangibly and wakenly presented to myself. I remember, however, more than distinctly, all that happened the last evening I passed in that secluded house, to my sojourn in which I owe all the benisons bestowed upon my after artist life. We had supped at our usual hour, but when I arose and advanced to salute Aronach as usual, and sighed to see how bright the sun was still upon everything without and within, he whispered in my ear—an attention he had never before paid me—“Stay up by me until the other two are off! for I wish to speak to thee, and to give thee some advice.”

Iskar saw him whisper, and looked very black because he could not hear, but Aronach waved him out, and bade me shut the door upon him and Starwood. I trembled then, for I was not used to be alone with him *tête-à-tête*; we usually had a third party present in the company of Marpurg or Albrechtsberger. He went into the closet first, and rummaged a few minutes, and then returning, appeared laden with a bottle of wine and my long hid fiddle-case. Oh, how I flew to relieve him of it! but he bade me again sit down, while he went back into the closet, and rummaged again; this time for a couple of glasses, and two or three curious jars, rich china, and of a beautiful form. He uncorked the bottle and poured me, as I expected, a glass of wine.

It was not the wine that agitated me, but the rarity of the attention, so much so that I choked instead of wishing him his health, as I ought to have done. But he was quite unmoved at my excitation, and leaned back to pour glass after glass down his own throat. I was so unused to wine that the sip I took exhilarated me, though it was the slightest wine one can imbibe for such purpose. And then he uncovered the odd gay jars, and helped me profusely to the exquisite preserves they contained. They were so luscious and delicate that they reminded me of Eden fruits; and almost before my wonder had shaped itself into form, certainly before it could have betrayed itself in my countenance, Aronach began to speak.

"They pique thee, no doubt, and not only thy palate, for thou wast ever curious. They come from him of whom thou hast never spoken since thy holiday."

"Everything comes from him, I think, Sir."

"No, only the good, not the evil nor the negative; and it is on this point I would advise thee, for thou art as inconsiderate as a fledgling turned out of the nest, and art ware of nothing."

"Pray advise me, Sir," I said, "and I shall be glad that I am inconsiderate, to be advised by you."

I looked at him, and was surprised that a deep seriousness overshadowed the constant gravity; which was as if one entered from the twilight a still more sombre wood.

"I intend to advise thee because thou art ignorant, though pure; untaught, yet not weak. I would not advise thy compeers, one is too young, the other too old."

"Iskar too old!" I exclaimed.

"Iskar was never a child; whatever thou couldst teach him would only ripen his follies, already too forward. He belongs to the other world."

"There are two worlds, then, in music," I thought, for it had been ever a favourite notion of my own, but I did not say so; I was watching him. He took from the breast pocket of his coat—that long brown coat—a little leather book, rolled up like a parchment; this he opened, and unfolded a paper that had lain in the curves, and yet curled round unsubmissive to his fingers. He deliberately bent it back, and held it a moment or two, while his eyes gathered light in their fixed gaze upon what he clasped, then smoothed it to its old shape with his palm, and putting on his horn-set eye-glasses, which lent him an owl-like reverendness, he began to read to me. And, as I have that little paper still, and as, if not sweet, it is very short, I shall transcribe it here and now:—

"When thou hearest the folks prate about art, be certain thou art never tempted to make friends there; for if they be wise in any other respect, they are fools in this, that they know not when to keep silence, and how. For art consists not in any of its representatives, and is of itself alone. To interpret it aright we must let it make its own way, and those who talk about it gainsay its true impressions, which alone remain in the bosom that is single and serene. If thou markest well, thou wilt find how few of those who make a subsistence out of music realise its full significance; for they are too busy to recall that they live for it, and not by it, even though it brings them

bread. And just as few are those who set apart their musical life from all ambition, even honourable; for ambition is of this earth alone, and in a higher yearning doth musical life consist; so the irreligious many are incapable of the fervour of the few. And the few, those I did exclude—the few who possess in patience this inexhaustible desire—are those who compose my world.”

“You mean, Sir,” I exclaimed, so warm, so glowing at my heart, that the summer without, brooding over the blossomed lindens, was as winter to the summer in my veins, so suddenly penetrated I felt—“you mean, Sir, that as good people I have heard speak of the world, and of good people who are not worldly, apart, and seem to know them from each other—in religion I mean—so it is in music. I am sure my sister thought so—my sister in England—but she never dared to say so.”

“No, of course not; there is no right to say so anywhere now except in Germany, for here alone has music its priesthood, and here alone, though little enough here, is reverentially regarded as the highest form of life, subserving to the purposes of the soul. But thou art right to believe entirely so, that, young as thou art, thou mayest keep thy purity, and mighty may be thy aptness to discern what is new to thee in the old, no less than what answers to the old in the new.

“And, first, when thou goest out of leading-strings, never accustom thyself to look for faults or feelings differing from thine own in those set over thee. It is certain that many a student of art has lost ground in this indulgence; for oftentimes the student, either from natural imagination, or from the vernal innocence of youth, will be outstripping his instructors in his grand intentions, and giving himself up to them will be losing the present hours in the air that should be informing themselves, with steady progress, in the strictest mechanical course. Never till thou hast mastered every conceivable difficulty, dream of producing the most distant musical effect.

“But, secondly, lest thine enthusiasm should perish of starvation under this mechanical pressure, keep thy wits awake to contemplate every artist and token of art that come between thee and daylight; and the more thou busiest thyself in mechanical preparation, the more leisure thou shalt discover so to observe; the more serene and brilliant shall thy imagination find itself; a clear sky filled with the sunshine of that enthusiasm which spreads itself over every object in earth and heaven.

"Again, of music, or the tone-art, as thou hast heard me name it, never let thy conception cease. Never believe thou hast adopted the trammels of a pursuit bounded by progress, because thine own progress bounds thine own pursuit. In despair at thy slow induction—be it slow as it must be gradual—doubt not that it is into a divine and immeasurable realm thou shalt at length be admitted; and if the ethereal souls of the masters gone before thee have thirsted after the infinite, even in such immeasurable space, recall thyself, and bow contented that thou hast this in common with those above thee—the insatiable presentment of futurity with which the Creator has chosen to endow the choicest of his gifts—the gift in its perfection granted ever to the choicest, the rarest of the race."

"And that is why it is granted to the Hebrew nation—why they all possess it like a right!" I cried, almost without consciousness of having spoken. But Aronach answered not; he only slightly, with the least motion, leaned his head so that the silver of his beard trembled, and a sort of tremor agitated his brow, that I observed not in his voice as he resumed.

"Thou art young, and mayest possibly excel early, as a mechanical performer. I need not urge thee to prune the exuberance of thy fancy, and to bind thy taste—by nature delicate—to the pure, strong models whose names are, at present, to thee their only revelation. For the scapegrace who figures in thy daily calendar as so magnificently thy superior, will ever stand thee instead of a warning or ominous repulsion, so long as thy style is forming; and, when formed, that style itself shall fence thee alike with natural and artful antipathy against the school he serves, that confesses to no restriction, no, not the restraint of rule; and is the servant of its own caprice.

"Thou shalt find that many who profess the art, confess not to that which they yet endure—a sort of shame in their profession, as if they should ennoble *it*, and not it *them*. Such professors thou shalt ever discover are slaves, not sons; their excellence as performers, owing to the accidental culture of their imitative instinct; and they are the *ripieni* of the universal orchestra, whose chief doth appear but once in every age.

"Thou shalt be set on to study by thine instructors, and, as I before hinted, wilt ever repose upon their direction. But, in applying to the works they select for thine edification,

whether theoretic or practical, endeavour to disabuse thyself of all thy previous impressions and prepossessions of any author whatsoever, and to absorb thyself in the contemplation of that alone thou busiest thyself upon.

“ Thus alone shall thine intelligence explore all styles, and so separate each from each, as finally to draw the exact conclusion from thine own temperament and taste of that to which thou dost essentially incline.

“ In treating of music specifically, remember not to confound its elements. As in ancient mythology many religious seeds were sown, and golden symbols scattered; so may we apply its enforcing fables where the new wisdom denies us utterance, and be nearer towards the expression of the actual than if we observed the literal forms of speech. Thus ever remembering that, as the Aorasia was a word signifying the invisibility of the gods, and the Avatar their incarnation, so is *time* the Aorasia of music the god-like, and *tone* its Avatar.

“ Then, in *time*, shalt thou realise that in which the existence of music as infallibly consists as in its manifestation, *tone*, and thine understanding shall become invested with the true nature of *rhythm*, which alike doth exist between time and tone, seeming to connect in spiritual dependence the one with the other inseparably.

“ In devoting thine energies to the works of art in ages behind thine own, thou shalt never be liable to depress thy consciousness of those which are meritorious *with* thee, and *yet* to come before thee. For thou wilt learn that to follow the supreme of art with innocence and wisdom, was ever allotted to the few whose labours yet endure; while as to the many whose high-flown perfections in their day seduced the admiration of the myriads to the neglect of the few, except *by* few—find we nothing of them at present, but the names alone of their operas, or the mention of their having been, and being now no more. And this is while the few are growing and expanding their fame, as the generations succeed, ever among the few of every generation; but yet, betokening in that still, secluded renown, the immortal purpose for which they wrote and died *not*.

“ Be assured that in all works that have endured there is something of the nature of truth; therefore, acquaint thyself with all, ever reserving the right to honour with peculiar investigation those works in which the author by scientific hold upon forceful imagination intimates that he wrote with

the direct intention to illustrate his art: not alone for the love of it, but in the fear of its service. Thus apply thyself to the compositions of Palestrina, of Purcell, of Alessandro Scarlatti, and the indefatigable Corelli; thus lend thyself to the master-pieces of Pergolesi, of Mozart, and Handel; thus lean with thine entire soul upon the might and majesty of John Sebastian Bach. All others in order, but these in chief; and this last generalissimo, until thou hast learnt to govern thyself."

He paused and stayed, and the summer evening-gold crowned him as he sat. That same rich gleam creeping in for all the deep shade that filled the heavenly vault, seemed to touch me with solemn ecstasy alike with his words. He was folding up that paper, and had nearly settled it before I dared to thank him; but as he held it out, and I grasped it, I also kissed the ivory of his not unwrinkled hand, and he did not withdraw it. Then I said, "My dear Master; my dear, dear Herr Aronach, is that for me to keep?"

"It is for thee," he answered; "and, perhaps, as there is little of it, thou wilt digest it more conveniently than a more abundant lecture. Thou art imaginative, or I should not set thee laws, and implicit, or thou wouldst not follow them."

"I should like to know, Sir, whether those are the sort of rules you gave the Chevalier Seraphael when he was a little boy?"

"No, no; they are not such as I gave him, be certain."

"I thought not, perhaps. Oh, Sir, how very surprising he must have been when he was so young and little."

"He did not rudely declaim, thou mayest imagine, at eight years old; and his voice was so modest to strangers, that it was hard to make him heard at all—this it was that made me set no laws before him."

"How then, Sir, did you teach him?" was my bolder question.

"He would discourse of music in its native tongue, when his small fingers conversed with the keys of his favourite harpsichord, so wondrously at home there, from the first time they *felt* themselves. And in still obedience to the law of that in-born harmony that governed his soul, he would bend his curly pate over the score till all the colour fell off his round cheek; and his forehead would work and frown with thoughts strong enough to make a strong man's brain quiver. I was severe with him to save my conscience; but he ever outwitted me, nor could I give him enough to do; for he made play of work,

and no light work of play. It was as if I should direct the south wind to blow in summer, or the sunbeams to make haste with the fruit. At length it came to such a pass—his calm attainment—that I gave him up to die! he left off growing too, and there was of him so little, that you would have thought him one the pleasant folk had changed at birth; bright enough were his eyes for such suspicion. So I clapped upon him one day as he was lying upon a bit of shade in my garden, his cap of velvet tumbled off, and the feather flying as you please, while over the score of Graun he had fallen fast asleep. When I came to him, I thought the little heart-strings had given way, to let him free altogether—he lay so still and heavy in his slumber, and no breath came through his lips that I could see. So I took him up, never waking him, and laid him away in bed, and locked up every staved sheet that lay about, and every score and note-book, and shut the harpsichord; and when at last he awoke, I took him upon my knee—for it was then he came to my house for his lessons, and I could do with him as I pleased. ‘Now,’ said I, ‘thou hast been asleep over thy books, and I have carried them all away, for thou art lazy, and shalt see them never again, unless thou art content to do as I shall bid thee.’

“Then he looked into my head with his kind child’s eyes, and said—

“‘I wish that thou wert my pupil, Master! for, if so, I should show thee how I should like to be taught.’

“‘Well, thou art now very comfortable on my knee, and mayest pull my watch-chain if thou wilt, and shalt also tell me the story of what thou shouldst teach thine old, grand pupil—we will make a play of it.’

“‘I do not care to pull thy chain now; but I should like to watch thy face while I tell thee.’

“So then, Master Carl, this elf stood upright on my knees, and spread out his arms, and laughed loud till the wet pearls shone, and while I held his feet—for I thought he would fly away—says he to mock me—

“‘Now, Master Aronach! thou mayest go home and play with thy little sister, at kings and queens, and never do any more lessons till thou art twelve years old, for that is the time to be a man, and do great things: and now thou art a poor baby, who cannot do anything but play, and go to sleep. And all the big books are put away, and nobody is to bring them out again until thou art big, and canst keep awake.’

“Then I looked at him hard, to see whether he was still

mocking me; but when I found he looked rather about to cry, I set him down, and took my hat, and walked out of my house to the lower ramparts. On the lower ramparts stood the fine house of his father, and I rang the bell quite free, and went boldly up the stairs. His mother was alone in her grand drawing-room, and, I said, that she might either come and fetch him away altogether, or let him stay with me and amuse himself as he cared for; that I would not teach him for those years to come, as he had said. The stately lady was offended, and carried him off from me altogether; and when he went he was very proud, and would not shed one tear, though he clung round my collar, and whispered, elf that he was—‘I shall come back when I am twelve—hush! Master, hush!’”

“And did he come back?” I cried, no less in ecstasy at the story, than at the confidence reposed in me.

“All in good time—peace,” said Aronach; “I never saw him again until the twenty-second morning of May, in the fourth year after his mother carried him off. I heard of the wonder-boy from every mouth; how he was taken here, and flourished there, to show off; and petted and praised by the king; and I thought often how piteous was it thus to spoil him. On that very morning I was up betimes, and was writing a letter to an old friend of mine, whose daughter was dead, when I heard feet like a fawn that was finding quick way up my dark stairs, and I stopped to listen. The door was burst open all in a moment, as if by the wind, and there he stood, in his little hat and feather, and his gay new dress, bright as a birthday prince; with a huge lumbering flower-pot in his two little arms. He set that upon the floor, and danced up to me directly, climbing upon my knees. ‘Will you take me back? for I am twelve, and nobody else can teach me! I know all *they* know.’

“He folded his little arms together round my collar, and held on there tight. What a minimus he was! scarcely a half-foot taller; but with such a noble air, and those same kind eyes of old. I pinched his fair cheek, which was red as any rose; but it was only a blossom born of the morning air—as he still sat upon my knees, the beauteous colour fell, faded quite away, and left him pale—pale as you now see him, Master Carl.”

“Oh, sir! tell me a little, little more. What did he tell you? what did he do?”

“He told me, with the pale face pressed against my coat—‘Thou seest, sweet Master, I would not take pains just at first,

and mamma was very grand; she never blessed me for a week, and I never kissed her. I did lessons with her, though, and tried to plague her, and played very sad, very ill, and would hardly read a bar. So mamma took it into her head to say that *you* had not taught me properly; and I grew very wild, angry; so hurt at least that I burst out, and ran downstairs, and came no more for lessons five whole days. Then I begged her pardon, and she sent for Herr Hümmel to teach me. I played my very best to Herr Hümmel, master mine!

"I dare say he did, thought I, the naughty one! the elf! there he lay back with his pale face, and all the mischief in his starry eyes.

" 'And Herr Hümmel,' my loveling went on, pursing his lips, 'said he could not teach me to play; but, perhaps, he could teach me to write. So I wrote for him ever so many pages, and he could not read them, for I wrote so small, so small; and Herr Hümmel has such very weak eyes!'

"Oh! how naughty he looked, lying across my knees!

" 'And then,' he prattled, 'mamma set herself to look for somebody very new and great; and she picked up Mons. Milans-André, who is a very young master, only nineteen years old; and mamma says he is a great genius. Now, as for me, dear master, I don't know what a great genius is; but if Mons. André be one, *thou* art not one, nor I.'

"Oh! the naughty one! still prattling on.—

" 'I did take pains, and put myself back, that he might show me over again what you, dear Master, had taught me, so that I never forget, and could not forget, if I tried; and in a year I told mamma, I would never touch the harpsichord again if she did not promise I should come back to you again. She said she couldn't promise; and, Master, I never *did* again touch the harpsichord; but, instead, I learned what was better, to play on Mons. André's grand pianoforte!'

"And how didst thou admire that, eh?" I asked, rather curious about the matter.

" 'Oh! it is very comfortable; I feel quite clear about it, and have written for it some things. But Mons. André is to go a tour, so he told mamma yesterday, and this morning, before he came I ran away, and I am returned to you, and have brought my tree to keep my birthday with you. And, Master mine, I *won't* go back again!'

"Before I could answer him, as I expected, comes a pull at the bell to draw the house down, and up the stairs creaks

Rathsherr Seraphael, the father, a mighty good-looking and very grand man. He takes a seat, and looks queer and awful. But the little one, quitting me, dances round and round his chair, and kisses away that frown.

“ ‘ Dear and beautiful papa, thou must give me leave to stay, I am thine only son ! ’

“ ‘ Thou art, indeed ; and hast never before disobeyed me. Why didst thou run away, my Adonais ? ’

“ ‘ Papa, *he* can only teach me ; I will *not* leave him, for I must obey music before you, and in him music calls me.’

“ He ran back to my knee, and there his father left him (but very disconcerted), and I don’t know how they settled it at home. But enough for me, there was never any more difficulty, and he and I kept his birthday together ; the little candles burned out among the linden flowers, and beautiful presents came for him and for me, from the great house on the ramparts.

“ And he never left me,” added Aronach, with a prodigious pleasure, too big to conceal, either by word or look ; “ he never left me until he set off for his travels all over Europe, during which travels I removed, and came up here a long distance from the old place, where I had him all to myself, and he was all to me.”

“ Thanks, dear Master ; if I too may so call you. I shall always feel that you are ; but I did not know how very much you had to do with him.”

“ Thou mayest so name me, because thou art not wanting in veneration, and can’st also be *mastered*.”

“ Thanks, for ever. And I may keep this precious paper. In your own writing, Sir, it will be more than if you had said it, you know, though I should have remembered every word. And the story, too, is just as safe as if you had written it for me.”

And so it was.

CHAPTER XXXII

WELL, as if but yesterday, do I remember the morning I set out from Lorbeerstadt for Cecilia. I had no friends yet with whom to reconnoitre novel ground ; I was quite solitary in my intentions, and rather troubled with a vague melancholy, the sun being under cloud, and I not having wished Aronach good-day. He was out in the town fulfilling the duties of his scholastic

pre-eminence, and I had vainly sought him for an audience. He had surrendered me my violin when he gave me the paper in his writing, and I also carried my certificate in my hand. Of all my personal effects I took these only—my bed and bedding, my clothes and books having preceded me; or, at least, having taken another form of flight. Iskar was to come also that time, but did not intend to present himself until the evening. Aronach had also forewarned me to take a coach, but I rather chose to walk, having divine reminiscences upon that earthly road.

With Starwood I had a grievous parting, not unallayed by hope on my part, and I left him wiping his eyes—an attention which deeply affected me, though I did not cry myself.

I shall never forget the singularly material aspect of things when I arrived. Conventionalism is not so rampant in Germany as in England, and courtesy is taught another creed. I think it would be impossible to be anywhere more free, and yet this sudden liberty (like a sudden light) did but at first serve to dazzle and distress me. Only half the students had returned, and they, all knowing each other, or seeming to do so, were standing in self-interested fraternities, broken by groups and greeters, in one immense hall, or what appeared to me immense, and therefore desolate. I came in through the open gates to the open court; through the open court into the open entry, and from that region was drawn to the door of that very hall by the hollow multitudinous echo that crept upon the stony solitude. It was as real to me a solitude to enter that noble space; and I was more abashed than ever, when, on looking round, I perceived none but males in all the company. There was not even a picture of the patron saintess; but there *was* a picture, a dark empanelled portrait, high over the long dining-tables. I concluded from the style that it was a representation of one Gratianos, the Bachist, of whom I had once heard speak.

The gentlemen in the hall were none of them full grown, and none wonderfully handsome at first sight. But the manner of their entertainment was truly edifying to me, who had not long been "out" in any sense. They every one either had been smoking, were smoking, or were about to smoke—that is, most of them had pipes in their mouths, or those who had them not in their mouths had just plucked them therefrom, and were holding them in their hands, or those who had not yet begun were preparing the apparatus.

In a corner of the hall, which looked dismally devoid of furniture to an English eye, there was a great exhibition of benches. There were some upright, others kicking their feet in the air, but all packed so as to take little space, and these were over and above the benches that ran all round the hall. In this corner a cluster of individuals had collected after a fashion that took my fancy in an instant, for they had established themselves without reference to the primary use and endowment of benches at all. Some sat on the legs thereof, upturned, with their own feet at the reversed bottoms, and more than a few were lying inside those reversed bottoms, with distended veins and excited complexions, suggesting the notion that they were in the enjoyment of plethoric slumber. To make a still further variation, one bench was set on end, and supported by the leaning figures of two contemporaneous medalists; and on the summit of this bench, which also rested against the wall, a third medalist was sitting, like an ape upon the ledge of Gibraltar; unlike an ape in this respect, that he was talking with great solemnity, and also that he wore gloves, which had once on a time been white. The rest were bare-headed, but all were fitted out with moustachios, either real or fictitious, for I had my doubts of the soft dark tassels of the Stylites, as his own pate was covered with hemp; it cannot have been hair. Despite its grotesqueness, this group, as I have said, attracted me, for there was something in every one of the faces that set me at my ease, because they appeared in earnest at their fun.

I came up to them as I made out their composition, and they one and all regarded me with calm, not malicious, indifference. They were very boyish for young men, and very manly for young boys, certainly; and remained, as to their respective ages, a mystery. The gentleman on the pedestal did not even pause until he came to a proper climax—for he was delivering an oration—and I arrived in time to hear the sentence so significant—"So that all who in verity apply themselves to science will find themselves as much at a loss without a body as without a soul, for the animal property nourisheth and illustrateth the spiritual, and the spiritual would be of no service without the animal, any more than should the flame that eateth the wood burn in an empty stove, or than the soup we have eaten for dinner should be soup without the water that dissolved the component nutritives."

Here he came to a full stop, and gazed upon me through

sharp-shaped orbs. Meantime I had drawn out my certificate, and handed it up to him. He took it between those streaky gloves, and having fixed a horn-set glass into his one eye, shut up the other, and perused the paper. I don't know why I gave it to him in particular, except that he was very high up, and had been speaking. But I had not done wrong, for he finished by bowing to me with exceeding patronage.

"One of us, I presume?"

"Credentials!" groaned one who was, as I had supposed, asleep. But my patron handed me very politely my envelope, and gravely returned to the treatment of his theme—whatever that might have been. Nobody appeared to listen except his twain supporters, and they only seemed attentive because they were thoroughly fumigated, and had their senses under a spell. The rest began to yawn, to sneer, and to lift their eyes, or rather the lids of them. I need scarcely say I felt very absurd, and at last on the utterance of an exceedingly ridiculous peroration from the orator, I yielded at once to the impulse of timidity, and began to laugh. The effect was of sympathetic magnetism. Everybody whose lips were disengaged began to laugh too; and finally, those very somnolent machines, that the benches propped, began to stir, to open misty glances, and to grin like purgatorial saints. This laugh grew a murmur, the murmur a roar, and finally the supporters themselves, fairly shaking, became exhausted, staggered, and let the pedestal glide slowly forwards. The theorist must certainly have anticipated such a crisis, for he spread his arms, and took a flying jump from that summit, descending elegantly and conveniently as a cat from a wall upon the boarded floor.

"Schurke!" said he to me, and held up at me a threatening hand; but, seized with a gleeful intention, I caught at it, and with one pull dragged off his glove. The member thus exposed was evidently petted by its head, for it was dainty and sleek, and also garnished with a blazing ring; and he solemnly held it up to contemplate it, concluding such performance by giving one fixed stare to each nail in particular. Then he flew at me in a paroxysm of feigned fierceness, but I had already flung the glove to the other end of the hall. The whole set broke into a fresh laugh, and one said, "Thou mightest have sent it up to the beard there, if thou hadst only thought of it."

"Never too late, Mareschal!" cried another, as he made a stride to fetch the glove, which, however, lay three or four strides off. He gathered it up at last, crumpled it in his hand,

and threw it high against the wall. It just missed the picture though, and fell at the feet of two perambulators, arm-in-arm, one of whom stood upon the glove till the other pushed him off, and gave the forlorn kidling a tremendous kick, that sent it farther than ever from the extempore target. There was now a gathering and rush of a dozen towards it. They tore it one from the other again; and, once more flinging it high—this time successfully—it hit that panelled portrait just upon the nose. A shout, half revengeful, half triumphant, echoed through the hall; but the game was not at its height.

“Gloves out, everybody!” cried several, and from all the pockets present, as it seemed, issued a miscellaneous supply. Very innocently, I gave up a pair of old wool ones that I happened to have with me; and soon, very soon, a regular systematised pelting commenced of that reverend representation in its recess.

I am very sure I thought it all fun at first; and as there is nothing I like so well as fun after music, I lent myself quite freely to the sport. About fifty pairs of gloves were knotted and crumpled, pair by pair, into balls, and whoever scrambled fastest secured the most. As the unsuccessful shots fell back, they were caught by uplifted hands, and banged upwards with tenfold ardour, and no one was so ardent and risibly dignified as the worthy of the pedestal. He behaved as if some valuable stake were upon his every throw; and further, I observed that after the game once begun, nobody, except myself, laughed. It was, at least, for half an hour that the banging, accompanied by a tremulous hissing, continued. I myself laughed so much that I could not throw, but I stood to watch the others. So high was the picture placed that very few were the missiles to reach it; and such as touched the time-sered canvas elicited an excitement I could neither realise nor respond to. All at once it struck me as very singular they should pelt that particular spot on the wall, and I instantly conjectured them to be inimical to the subject of the delineation. I was just making up my mind to inquire, when the great door hoarsely creaked, and a voice was heard, quite in another key from the murmurous shout, to penetrate my ear at that distance, so that I immediately responded—“Has Carl Auchester arrived?”

There was no reply, nor any suspension of the performance on hand, except on my part. But for me I turned, gladly, yet timorously, and joined the speaker in a moment. He greeted me with what appeared to me an overawing polish, though, in

fact, it was but the result of temperament not easily aroused. He was very slim and fair, and, though not tall, gave me the impression of one very much more my senior than he really was. He held his arm as a kind of barrier between me and the door until I was safely out of the hall; then said to me, in a tone of chill but still remonstrance—

“Why did you go in there? That was not a good beginning.”

“Sir,” I replied, not stammered, for I felt my cause was good, “how was I to know I ought not to go in there? It seemed quite the proper place, with all those Cecilians about; and, besides, no one told me where else to go. But if I did wrong, I won’t go in there again, and I certainly have not been harmed yet.”

“You must go there at times. It is there you will have to eat. But a few who are really students hold aloof from the rest, who idle whenever they are not strictly employed, as you have had reason to notice. I was induced to come and look for you, of whom I should otherwise have no knowledge, in obedience to the Chevalier Seraphael’s request that I should do so.”

“Did he really remember me in that manner? How good, how angelic!” I cried; and yet I did not quite find my new companion charming; his irresistible quiescence piqued me too much, though he was anything but haughty.

“Yes, he is good; and was certainly very good to bear in mind one so young as you are. I hope you will reward his kindness. He gives us great hopes of you.”

“Are you a professor, Sir?” I asked, half afraid of my own impulse.

“I am *your* professor,” he announced, with that same distance. “I am first violin.”

I did not know whether I was pleased or sorry at that instant, for I could detect no magnetic power that he possessed, and rather shrank from contact with him at present. He led me up many stairs—a side staircase, quite new—built steeper and narrower than the principal flight. He led me along thwart passages, and I beheld many doors and windows, too; for light and air both reigned in these regions, which were fresh, and smelled of health. He led me into a chamber so lengthened that it was almost a gallery, for it was very high besides. Here he paused to exhibit a suite of prophets’ chambers, one after the other completely to the end: for in every division was a

little bed, a bench, and washing-table, with a closet, closed by hasps of wood. The uniform arrangement struck me as monotonous, but academical. My guide, for the first time, smiled, but very slightly, and explained—

“This is my division—‘*les petits Violons*,’ you know, Auchester? You may see the numbers on every alcove; and here you practise, except when met in class or at lecture. Your number is 13, and you are very nearly in the middle. See, you have a curtain to draw before your bed; and in this closet there is a box for books, as well as a niche for your instrument, and abundant room for clothes unless you bring more than you can possibly want. The portmanteau and chest, which were brought this morning, you may keep here, if you please, as well.”

I did not thank him, for I was pre-occupied with an infernal suggestion to my brain, which I revealed in my utter terror.

“Oh! Sir, do we all practise together, then? What a horrible noise! and how impossible to do anything so—I can’t, I know!”

Another half-smile curled the slender, brown moustache.

“It was indeed so in the times I can still remember. But see how much more than you can own you are indebted to this Chevalier Seraphael!”

He walked to the wall opposite the alcove, and, laying hold of a brass ring I had not noticed, drew out a long slide of wood, very thick and strong, which shut one in from side to side.

“There is such a one to every bed,” continued he; “and if you draw them on either hand, you will hear nothing, at least nothing to disturb you. Come away now; I have not much time to spare, and must leave you elsewhere.”

He led me from the chambers, and down the stairs again, and here and there, so that I heard an organ playing in one region, and voices that blended again to another idea—and then all was stillness, except the rustle of his gown. But before I could make up my mind to approve or criticise the arrangements which struck me on every hand, I found myself in another room; this vaulted, and inspiring as nothing I had met with in that place. How exquisite was the radiant gloom that here pervaded within, as within a temple!—for the sunshine pierced through little windows of brown and amber, and came down in wavering dusky brightness on parchment hues and vellum, morocco, and ruddy gold. Here a thick matting returned no footfall; and although the space was small, and

very crowded, too, yet it had an air of vastness, from the elevated concave of the roof. Benches were before each book-case, that presented its treasury of dread tomes and gigantic scores; also reading-desks; and besides such furniture, there were the quaintest little stalls between each set of shelves—shrine-like niches, one could just sit in, or even at pleasure lie along; for seats were in them of darkest polished wood. Some were already occupied, and their occupants were profoundly quiet. Perhaps studying—perhaps asleep.

“Here,” observed my guide, “you are only allowed to come and remain in silence. If one word be spoken in the library, expulsion of the speaker follows. The bookkeeper sits out there,” pointing to an erection like a watch-box, “and hears, and is to observe all. You may use any book in this place, but never carry it away; and if required for quotation, as well as for reference, you may here make your extracts, but never elsewhere. There are ink bottles in every desk. And if you take my advice, you will remain here until the supper-bell; for while here, you will at least be out of mischief. We are not to-day in full routine; but that makes it the more dangerous to be at large.”

“Will you set me some task, then, Sir? I do want something to be at.”

He seemed only to sneer at such a desire. “Nonsense! there is enough for to-day in mastering all those names;” and he took down a catalogue, and handed it to me.

I ran into one of those dear, dark recesses, and there he left me.

When he had gone, I did not open my book for a time. I was in a highly-wrought mood, which was induced by that sombre-tinted, struggling sunshine, whose beams played high in the ceiling, like fire-flies in a cedar shade, so fretted and so far. It was delicious as a dream to be safe and solitary in that dim palace of futurity, whose vistas stretched before me into everlasting lengths of light. I read not for a long, long hour; and when I did open my book (itself no mean volume as to size), I was bewildered and bedimmed by a swarm of names, both of works and authors, I had never heard of—Huygens, Martini, Euler, Pfeiffer, and Marpurg, alone meeting me as distant acquaintances, and Cherubini as a dear, old friend.

This was, in fact, a catalogue *raisonnée*, and I was not in a very rational mood. I therefore shut the book, and began to pace the library. It is extraordinary how intense is the power of application in the case of those who are apprenticed to a

master they can worship as well as serve. I thought so then. Nothing could divert the attention of those supine students in the recesses, nor of the scribes at the desks. I went quite close to many of them, and could have looked into their eyes, but that they were, for the most part, closed; and I should have accused them of being asleep but that their lips were moving, and I knew they were learning by heart. Great black letter was the characteristic of one huge volume I stayed to examine, as it lay upon a desk, and he who sat before it had a face sweeter than any present, sensible as interesting; and I did not fear him, though his eyes were wide open, and alert. He was making copious extracts, and, as I peeped between the pages he held by his thumb and a slight forefinger, he observed me, and gave me a smile—at the same time turning back the title-page for my inspection. That was encircled by a wreath of cherubs' faces for flowers, and musical instruments for leaves, old and droll as the title, *Caspar Bartholin, his Treatise on the Wind Music of the Ancients*.

I smiled then, and nodded, to express my thanks; but a moment afterwards he wrote for me, on a sheet in his blotting-case, which he carried with him—

“We may write, though we may not speak. Are you just arrived?”

He handed me the pen to answer, and I wrote, “Only an hour or two ago; and I got into a scrape directly. I am Carl Auchester, from England; but I am not English. What is your name?”

He smiled warmly as he read, and thus our correspondence proceeded, “Franz Delemann. What was your scrape? I wonder you had one, now I know your name.”

“Why?” I replied. “There is no reason why I should keep clear any more than another; but I went into the great hall, where so many of them were about, and they made a great noise, for they were pelting the picture that is on the wall; and while I was helping them—just for fun—the gentleman who brought me in here fetched me out, and said it was a bad beginning.”

“That was his way of putting it,” resumed my new associate. “He is very matter-of-fact, that Anastase. But I know what he meant. We are a very small party, and the rest persecute us. They would have been glad to get you over to their side, because it would have been such a triumph for them—coming first, as you did come.”

Oh! how I did scribble in response. "I have not an idea what you mean. Pray, tell me quickly."

"The Chevalier Seraphael took the place here of somebody very unlike him. I thought the Cerinthias had told you."

"The what?"

"The Fräulein, who came in with you the day of the concert, who came to the pavilion with Seraphael and yourself, was one of the Cerinthias. I thought, of course, you knew all; for her words are better than any one's, and you had been together; so she told me afterwards."

"Is she Cerinthia? What a queer name!"

"They are a queer set, though I don't suppose there ever was such a set. The brother and the two sisters appear to possess every natural gift among them. The father was a great singer, and celebrated master, but not a German. He came here to secure their education in a certain style; and just as he got here, he died. Then the brother, though they had not a penny among them all, made way by his extraordinary talent; and as he could play on any instrument, he was admitted to the second place in the band, and his sister was taken upon the foundation. Milans-André made a great deal of their being here, though it was perfectly natural, *I* think. The youngest had been put out to nurse, and kept in some province of France, until old enough to be admitted also, but then something happened, which changed that notion. For when Seraphael took the place of Milans-André, he had every arrangement investigated, that he might improve to the utmost; and it was discovered—after this fashion—that this Maria Cerinthia had been allowed to occupy a room which was inferior to all the others. I think the rain came in, but I am not sure of that—I only know it was out of the way, and wretched. Seraphael was exceedingly vexed—almost in a passion; but turned it into amusement, as he does so often before others when he is serious at heart. He had the room turned into what it was just fit for—a closet for faggots.

"Then this proud Cerinthia—the brother, I mean, whose name, by the way, is Joseph—took offence himself; and, declaring no arrangement should be altered on account of his sister, took her away, and had a lodging in the village instead. She comes here every day at the same time; and is what we call an out-Cecilian, never staying to meals or to sleep, that is. Seraphael took no notice; and I was rather surprised to discover that he has been to see them several times, because, you

see, I thought *he* was proud in his way to have his generosity rejected."

"Does he like them so very much, then?"

"He ought."

Now I wanted to be very angry at the intimation, but my informant had too expressive a face, so I merely added, "They are then very wonderful?"

"They are all wonderful, and the little one, who is not quite eight years old (for she has come to live with them since they lived alone), is a prodigy, but not beautiful like the one you saw."

"*She* is, I suppose, the cleverest in all the house?"

"She must be so; but is so very quiet one does not hear about her, except at the close of the semestre, when she carries off the medals; for everything of the best belongs to her. She is a vocalist, and studies, of course, in the other wing; we never meet the ladies, you know, except in public."

"Oh! of course not. Now do tell me what you mean about the two parties."

"I mean that when Milans-André went away no one knew how much mischief he had done. His whole system was against Bach, and this is properly a school for Bach. He could not eradicate the foundation, and he could not confess his dislike against our master in so many words. The only thing was to introduce quite a new style, or I am sure it might be called school, for he has written such an immense deal. It was an opera of his, performed in this town, that at once did for him as far as those were concerned whom he had deceived, and that determined us not to submit ourselves any longer. He was becoming so unpopular that he was too happy to resign. Still he left a number for himself behind him greater than those who had risen against him."

"Tell me about that opera, pray. You write interesting letters, Sir."

"I have interesting matter, truly. The opera was called 'Emancipation; or, the Modern Orpheus.' The overture took in almost all of us, it was so well put together, but I fancy you would not have approved of it, somehow. The theatre here is very small, and was quite filled by our own selves and a few artists; not one amateur, for it was produced in rehearsal. The scenery was very good; the story rambling and fiendish; but we thought it fairy-like. There was a perfect hit in the hero, who was a monstrous fiddle-player, to represent whom

he had Paganini, as he had not to speak a word. The heroines, who were three in number, were a sort of musical nuns, young ladies dedicated to the art; but they, first one, then another, fell in with the fiddler, and finding him, became enamoured of him. He condescends to listen to the first while she sings, or rather he comes upon her as she is singing the coolest of all Bach's solos, in the coolest possible style. He waits till the end with commendable patience, and then, amidst infernal gesticulations, places before her a cantata of his own, which is something tremendous, when accompanied by the orchestra. The contrasted style, with the artful florid instrumentation, produces rapture, and is really an *effect*, though I do not say of what kind. The next heroine he treats to a grand scena, in which the violin is absolutely made to speak; and as it was carried through by Paganini, you may conjecture it was rather bewitching. The last lady he bears off fairly, and they converse in an outlandish duet between the voice of the lady and the violin. I can give you no outline of the plan, for there is no plot that I could find afterwards, but merely the heads of each part. Next comes a tumble-down church, dusty, dark, repelling to the idea from the beginning; and you are aware of the Lutheran service which is being droned through as we are not very likely to hear it, in fact. By magic the scene dissolves; coloured lights break from tapering windows; arches rise and glitter like rainbows; altar candles blaze and tremble; crimson velvet and rustling satin fill the Gothic stalls on either side; and while you are trying to gather in the picture, the *Stabat Mater* bursts out in strains about as much like weeping as all the mummary is like music.

"The last scene of all is a kind of temple where priests and priestesses glide in spangled draperies, while the hierarch is hidden behind a curtain. Busts and statues, that I suppose are intended for certain masters, but whom it is not very easy to identify, as they are ill-fashioned and ill-grouped, are placed in surrounding shrines. At strains for signs from that curtailed chief, the old heads and figures are prostrated from the pedestals; the ruins are swept aside by some utilitarian angel, and the finale consists in a great rush of individuals masked, who crown the newly-inaugurated statue of the elevated Orpheus, and then dance around him to the ballet music, which is accompanied by the chorus also, who sing his praise.

"It was very exciting while it went on; as exciting to see as it is absurd to remember; and there was nothing for it but

applause upon the spot. When the curtain fell, and we were crushing and pressing to get out, having been hardly able to wake ourselves up, and yet feeling the want that succeeds enjoyment or excitement that goes no further;—you know how?—one chord sounded behind the curtain from one instrument within the orchestra. It arrested us most curiously; it was mystical as we call it, though so simple; enough to say that under those circumstances it seemed a sound from another sphere. It continued and spread—it was the People's Song you heard the day you first came to us. It was once played through without vocal illustration, but we all knew the words and began to sing them.

"We were singing still in a strange sort of roar I can't describe to you, when the music failed, and the curtain was raised on one side. He—Seraphael, whom we knew not then—stood before us for the first time. You know how small he is; as he stood there he looked like a child of royal blood, his head quite turned me, it was so beautiful; and we all stood with open mouths to see him, hoping to hear him speak. He spread out those peculiar hands of his, and said in his sweet clear voice—'That song, oh ladies and gentlemen! which you have shown you love so well, is very old, and you do not seem to be aware that it is so, nor of its author. Who wrote it, made it for us, think you?'

"His beauty, and his soft commanding voice, had just the effect you will imagine; everybody obeyed him. One and another exclaimed, 'Hasse!'—'Volger!'—'Hegel!'—'Storace!'—'Weber!' but it was clear the point had not been contested. Then he folded his arms together, and laid them on his breast, with a very low bow that brought all the hair into his eyes. Then he shook back the curls and laughed.

"'It is *Bach*, my dear and revered Sebastian Bach—of all the Bachs alone *the* Bach; though indeed to any one Bach, one of us present is not fit to hold a candle. You do not love Bach—I do. You do not reverence him—he is in my religion. You do not understand him—I am very intimate with him. If you knew him, you, too, would love and worship and desire of him to know more and more. Ladies and gentlemen! you are all just. He has no one to take his part, as has your nondescript modern Orpheus. I shall give a lecture on Bach in this theatre to-morrow evening. Everybody comes in free. Only come!'

"Who could refuse him?—who could have refused him as he stood there? and flying behind the curtain, peeped again

between the folds of it, and bowed! Besides there was a strong curiosity at work—a curiosity of which many were ashamed. Do I tire you?”

“More likely yourself. Do finish about the lecture!”

“The supper-bell will be soon ringing, and will shake the story out of me, so I must make haste. I can tell it you properly some time. The next evening there was such a crowd at the door that they kicked it in, and stood listening outside. The curtain was done away with, and we never could make out how that organ came there which towered behind; but there it stood, and a pianoforte in front. The Chevalier appeared, dressed in black, with nothing in his arms but a heap of programmes, written in his own hand, which he distributed himself, for he had no assistant. You know that Forkel has written a life of Bach? well, I have since read this, and have been puzzled to find how such a poem as we listened to could have sprung from the prose of those dry memoirs. The voice was enough, if it had not said what it did say; so delicious a voice to hear, that no one stirred for fear of losing it.

“I cannot give you the slightest outline; but I have never read any romance so brilliant, nor any philosophy that I could so take into myself. The illustrations were fugue upon fugue. Oh, to hear that organ with its grand interpretations, and the silver voice between!—and study upon study for the harpsichord that from the new pianoforte seemed to breathe its old excitement—chorale upon chorale—until, with that song restored to its own proper form, it ended—I mean the lecture. I cannot say, though, about the ending, for I was obliged to leave before it was over; the clear intellect was too much for me, and the genius knocked me down. Many others left upon my very heels; but those who stayed seemed hardly to recall a word that had been said. All were so impressed, for that night, at least, that I can remember nothing to compare with it, except the descriptions in your English divinity books of the revivals in religion of your country. The next day, however, the scoffers found their tongues again, and only we to whom the whole affair had appeared on the occasion itself a dream, awoke to a reality that has never left us. We have not been the same since, and that is one reason we were so anxious you should be one with the students of Bach, even before you knew what you must profess.”

“Oh! I come from a good school; for Aronach is full of Bach. But do tell me about the others.”

"The Andreites, as they call themselves, are not precisely inimical to Seraphael; that would be impossible, he is so companionable, so free, and truly great; but they, one and all, slight Bach; and as some of them are professors, and we all study under the professor of our voice or instrument in particular, it is a pity for the fresh comers to fall into the wrong set."

"But I am safe, at least, for I am certain that Anastase is of the right school."

"The very best; he is a Seraphaelite. They call us Seraphaelites, and we like it; but Seraphael does not like it; so we only use the word now for parole, Bruderschaft."

"Why, I wonder, does he not like it?"

"Because he is too well bred."

Oh, how I enjoyed that expression! It reminded me of Lenhart Davy and his sayings. I was just going to intrude another question when my intention was snapped by the ringing of the bell, which made a most imposing noise. The sound caused a sudden rush and rustle through the library, gowned and ungowned figures forsook the nooks and benches, and they each and all put by their books as deftly, dexterously as Millicent used to lay her thimble into her work-box when she was a wee maiden. They did not stare at me at all, which was very satisfactory; and I found occasion to admire all their faces. I told my companion so, and he laughed, rubbing his eyes and stretching; then he put his arm about my neck in strict fraternal fashion, which gratified me exceedingly, and not the less because he was evidently by several years my elder. We left the library together, and right rejoiced was I to hear myself speak again; the first thing that occurred to me to say, I said, "Oh! I wanted so much to know what is your instrument."

"I don't think I shall tell you," he replied, in a guileless voice, interesting as his behaviour and language.

"Why not? I must know it at last, must I not?"

"Perhaps you will not think so well of me, when you know what I exist for."

"That would make no difference, for every instrument is as great with reference to others as some are in themselves."

"Seraphael could not have put it better. I play the trombone. It is a great sacrifice at present."

"But," I returned, "I have not heard the instrument; is it not a splendid sort of trumpet? You mean it is not good for solos?"

"It is quite to itself—a mere abstraction considered by itself—but to the orchestra what red is to the rainbow."

"I know who said that. He puts brass last I see."

"Oh, you are a thief! You know everything already. Yes, he does put the violet first."

"The violin? Yes, so he called it to me; but I did not know he was fond of calling it so."

"It is one of his theories. It was, however, one day after he had been expounding it to a few of us who were fortunate enough to be present, when he was glancing through the classrooms, that he put up his hands, and in his bright way, you know, scattering your reasoning faculties like a burst of sunshine, said, 'Oh, you must not entertain a word I have said to you!—it is only to be dreamed.'"

"What did he say? What had he said? Do, pray, out with it, or I cannot eat, I am sure."

We were just outside the hall doorway now; within were light and a hundred voices mingled; into the dusk he gave his own, and I took it safely home in silence.

"His theory—oh, it was in this way! Strings first, of course, violet, indigo, blue—violin, violoncello, double-bass—upon these you repose; the vault is quite perfect. Green, the many-sounded kinds of wood, spring-hued flutes, deeper, yet softer, clarinetti, bassoons the darkest tone, not to be surpassed in its shade—another vault. The brass, of course, is yellow; and if the horns suggest the paler dazzle, the trumpets take the golden orange, and the red is left for the trombones, vivid, or dun and dusk."

"Oh, my goodness! I don't wonder he said it was a dream."

"It certainly would be dangerous to think of it in any other light!"

"And you a German!" I cried. "Did you think I meant it?"

"You would mean it," he retorted, "if you knew what lip-distorting and ear-distracting work it is practising this same trombone."

"But what is your reason, then, for choosing it, when you might choose *mine*?"

"Do you not know that Seraphael has written, as no one else, for the trombone? And he was heard to sigh, and to say, 'I shall never find any one to play these passages!'"

"Oh, Delemann! and that was the reason you took it up? How I love you for it!"

CHAPTER XXXIII

ALL lives have their prose translation, as well as their ideal meaning; how seldom *this* escapes in language worthy, while *that* tells best in words. I was a good deal exhausted for several days after I entered the school, and saw very little except my own stuntedness and deficiency in the mirror of contemplation. For Anastase took me to himself awfully the first morning, all alone; examined me, tortured me, made me blush, and hesitate, and groan; bade me be humble and industrious; told me I was not so forward as I might be, drenched me with medicinal advices that lowered my mental system, and, finally, left me in possession of a minikin edition of what I had conceived myself the day before, but which he deprived me of at present, if not annihilated for ever.

It was, doubtless, a very good thing to go back to the beginning, if he intended to re-create me; but it happened that such transmutation could not take place twice, and it had already occurred once; still I was absolved from obvious discomfiture to the regenerator, by my silent adaptations to his behaviour.

That which would assuredly become a penance to the physique in dark or wintry weather, remained still a charming matutinal romance—namely, that we all rose at four o'clock, except any one who might be delicate, and that we practised a couple of hours before we got anything to eat; I mean formally for, in fact, we almost all smuggled into our compartments wherewithal to keep off the natural, which might not amalgamate with the spiritual, constraining appetite. Those early mornings were ineffaceably effective for me; I advanced more according to my desires than I had ever advanced before, and I laid up a significant store of cool sequestered memories. I could, however, scarcely realise my own existence under these circumstances, until the questioner within me was subdued to "contemplation" by my first "adventure."

I had been a week in durance, if not vile, very void, for I had seen nothing of the Cerinthias, nor of their interesting young advocate, except at table, though certainly on these latter occasions we surfeited ourselves with talk that whetted my curiosity to a double edge. On the first Sunday, however, I laid hold of him coming out of church, when we had fulfilled our darling duties in the choir—for the choir of our little perfect

temple, oak-shaded and sunlit, was composed entirely of Cecilians, and I have not time in this place to dilate upon its force and fulness. Delemann responded joyously to my welcome; and when I asked him what was to be our task on Sunday, he answered that the rest of the day was our own, and that if I pleased we would go together and call upon that Maria and her little sister, of whom I knew all that could be gained out of personal intercourse.

"Just what I wished," said I, "how exactly you guessed it."

"Oh, but I wanted to go myself!" answered Franz, laughing, "for I have an errand thither;" and together we quitted the church garden, with its sheltering lime shadow, for the sultry pavement. It cannot have been five minutes that we walked, before we came in front of one of those narrowest and tallest of the droll abodes I was pretty well used to now, since I had lived with Aronach. We went upstairs, too, in like style to that of the old apprentice home, and even as there, did not rest until nearly at the top. Delemann knocked at a door, and, as if perfectly accustomed to do so, walked in without delay. The room we entered was slightly furnished, but singularly in keeping with each other were the few ornaments, unsurpassably effective. Also a light clearness threw up and out each decoration from the delicate hue of the walls and the mild fresco of their borders, unlike anything I had yet seen, and startling, in spite of the simplicity of the actual accommodations, from their excelling taste. Upon brackets stood busts, three or four, and a single vase of such form that it could only have been purchased in Italy. At the window were a couch and reading desk, also a table ready prepared with some kind of noonday meal; and at the opposite end of the apartment rose from the polished floor the stove itself, entirely concealed under lime-branches and oak-leaves. The room, too, was not untenanted, for upon the couch, though making no use whatever of the desk, lay a gentleman, who was reading, nevertheless, a French newspaper. He was very fine, grand-looking, I thought; his dress appeared courtly; so courtly was his greeting. "You have not come for me, I know," he observed to Delemann, having seated us; "but the girls, having dined, are gone to rest; we don't find it easy to dispense with our siesta. You will surely eat first, for you must be hungry, and I am but just come in." He was, in fact, waiting for the soup, which swiftly followed us; and so we sat down together. Franz then produced a little basket, which I had noticed him to carry very

carefully as we came along; but he did not open it, he placed it by his side upon the table. It was covered, and the cover was tied down with green ribbon. I was instantly smitten curious; but a great stay to my curiosity was the deportment of our host. I had seen a good many musicians by this time, and found them every one the alone civilised and polished of the human race! but there were evidences of supremacy in a few that I detected not even in the superior many. Some had enthralled me more than this young Cerinthia, for I now know he was young, though at that time he appeared extremely my elder, and I could have believed him even aged; but there was about him an unassuming nobility that bespoke the highest of all educations—that according to the preparations and purposes of nature. He seemed to live rationally, and I believe he did, though he was not to the immediate perception large-hearted. He ate, himself, with the frugality of Ausonia, but pressed us with cordial attention; and for me, I enjoyed my dinner immensely, though I had not come there to eat. Franz did not talk to him about his sisters, as I should have perhaps wished, and I dared not mention them, for there was that in Cerinthia's hazy lustrous eyes that made me afraid to be as audacious as my disposition permitted. Presently, while we were drinking to each other, I heard little steps in the passage; and as I expected an apparition, I was not surprised when there entered upon those light feet a little girl, who, the first moment, reminded me of Laura, but not the next, for her face was unlike as my own. She was very young, indeed, but had a countenance unusually formed, though the head was infantine—like enough to our entertainer to belong to him, like as to delicacy of extremities, and emerald darkness of eye. She wore a short white frock, and two beautiful plaits of thick bright hair kept and dressed like that of a princess. She took no notice of me, but curtsied to Delemann with an alien air most strange to me, and then ran past him to her brother, whom she freely caressed, at the same time, as it were, to hide her face. "Look up! my shy Josephine," said he, "and make another curtsy to that young gentleman, who is a great friend and connoisseur of the Chevalier Seraphael." Josephine looked back at me from beneath her heavy eyelashes, but still did not approach. Then I said, "How is your sister, Miss Josephine? I am only a little friend of the Chevalier—she is the great one."

"I know," replied she, in a sage child's voice, then looking

up at her brother, "Maria is tired, and will not come in here, Joseph."

"She is lying down, then?"

"No, she is brushing her hair." We all laughed at this.

"But run to tell her that Franz Delemann is here, and Carl Auchester with him; or, if you cannot remember this name, Delemann's alone will do."

"But she knows, for we heard them come in, and she said she should stay in her room; but that if Mr. Delemann had a letter for her I might carry it there."

"I don't know whether there is a letter in here, Josephine; but this basket came for her."

"How pretty!" said Josephine; and she stretched her tiny hand, a smile just shining over her face that reminded me of her beautiful sister. I saw she was anxious to possess herself of it, but I could not resist my own desire to be the bearer.

"Let me take it to her!" I exclaimed, impulsively. Cerinthia looked up, and Franz, too, surprised enough; but I did not care. I rose. "She can send me back again, if she is angry," I pleaded; and Cerinthia fairly laughed.

"Oh, you may go! She will not send you back, though I should certainly be sent back if *I* took such a liberty."

"Neither would she admit me," said Delemann.

"Why, you came last Sunday," put in little Josephine; and then she looked at me, with one finger to her lip.

"Come, too!"

So we went, she springing before me to a door, which she left ajar as she entered, while I discreetly remained outside.

"May he come, Maria?" I heard her say, and then I heard that other voice.

"Who, dear little Josephine, which of them?"

"The little boy."

"The little boy!" she gave a kind of bright cry, and herself came to the door. She opened it, and, standing yet there, said, with the loveliest manner, "You will not quarrel with this little thing! But forgive her, and pray come in. It was kind to come all the way up those stairs, which are steep, as the road to fame."

"Is that steep?" I asked, for her style instantly excited me to a rallying mood.

"Some say so," she replied; "those who seek it. But come and rest." And she led me by her flower-soft finger-tips to a sofa, also in the light as in the room I had quitted, and bathed

in airs that floated above the gardens, and downwards from the heavens into that window also open. A curtain was drawn across the alcove at the end, and, between us and its folds of green, standing out most gracefully, was a beautiful harp; there were also more books than I had seen in a sitting room since I left my Davy, and I concluded they had been retrieved from her lost father's library. But, upon the whole room there was an atmosphere, thrown neither from the gleaming harp nor illustrating volumes; and as my eyes rested upon her, after roving everywhere else, I could only wonder I had ever looked away. Her very dress was such as would have become no other, and was that which she herself invested with its charm. She wore a dark-blue muslin, darker than the summer heaven, but of the selfsame hue; this robe was worn loosely, was laced in front over a white bodice. Upon those folds was flung a shawl of some dense rose-colour, and an oriental texture, and again over that shady brilliance fell the long hair, velvet-soft and darker than the pine trees in the twilight. The same unearthly hue slept in the azure-emerald of her divinely-moulded eyes, mild and liquid as orbéd stars, and just as super-human. The hair thus loosened, swept over her shoulder into her lap. There was not upon its stream the merest ripple, it was straight as long, and, had it not been so fine, must have wearied with its weight a head so small as hers.

"What magnificent hair you have!" said I.

"It seems I was determined to make of it a spectacle. If I had known you were coming I should have put it out of the way; but, whenever I am lazy or tired I like to play with it. The Chevalier calls it my rosary."

I was at home directly.

"The Chevalier! oh! have you seen him since that day?"

"Four, five, six times."

"And I have not seen him once."

"You shall see him eight, nine, ten times. Never mind! He comes to see me, you know, out of that kindness whose prettiest name is charity."

"Where is he now?" I inquired, impatient of that remark of hers.

"Now? I do not know. He has been away a fortnight, conducting everywhere. Have you not heard?"

"No; what?"

"Of the 'Mer de Glace' overture and accompaniments."

"I have not heard a word."

She took hold of her hair and stroked it impatiently; still there was such sweetness in her accent, as made me doubt she was angry.

"I told Florimond to tell you. He always forgets those things!"

I looked up inquiringly; there was that in her eye which might be the light of an unfallen tear.

"But I don't know who you mean."

"I am glad not. How silly I am. Oh, *madre mia*! this hot weather softens the brain, I do believe—I should never have done it in the winter. And all this time I have been wondering what is that basket upon which Josephine seems to have set her whole soul."

"It is for you," said Josephine.

"Oh!" I exclaimed, "how careless I am. Yes, but I do not know who it comes from. Franz brought it."

"Young Delemann? Oh, thank him, please. I know very well. Here, then, *piccola! carina!* you shall have to open it. Where are the ivory scissors?"

"Oh, how exquisite!" I cried; for I knew she meant those tiny fingers.

"Exquisite is it? It is again from the Chevalier."

"Did he say so? I thought it like him; but you are so like him."

"I? well I believe you are right: there is a kind of likeness."

She raised her eyes, so full of lustre, that I even longed for the lids to fall. The brilliant smile, like the most ardent sunlight, had spread over her whole face. I forgot her strange words in her unimaginable expression, until she spoke again. All this while the little one was untwisting the green bands which were passed over and under the basket. At length the cover was lifted; there were seven or eight immense peaches. I had thought there must be fruit within, from the exhaling scent, but still I was surprised. There was no letter; this disappointed me, but there were fresh leaves at the very bottom. My chief companion took out these, and laid each peach upon a leaf; her fingers shone against the downy blush. She presented me with one after another. "Pray eat them, or as many as you can; I do not eat fruit to-day, for it is too hot weather, and *she* must not eat so many." I instantly began to eat, and made efforts to do even more than I ought. Josephine carried off her share on a doll's plate. Then her sister rose and took in a birdcage from outside the window,

where it had hung, but I had not seen it. There was within it a small bird, and dull enough it looked until she opened the door, when it fluttered to the bars, hopped out, stood upon a peach, and then, espying me, flew straight into her bosom. It lay there hidden for some minutes, and she covered and quite concealed it with her lovely little hand. I said—

“Is it afraid of me? Shall I go?”

“Oh, dear no,” she replied; “it does like you, and is only shy. Do you never wish to be hidden when you see those you like?”

“I never have yet, but I dare say I shall now I come to think about it.”

“You certainly will. This silly little creature is not yet quite sure of us, that is it.”

“Where did it come from?”

“It came from under the rye-stacks. He—that is always the Chevalier, you know—was walking through the rye-fields when the moon was up; the reapers had all gone home. He heard a small cry withering under the wheat, and stayed to listen. Most men would not have heard such a weak cry! no man would have stayed to listen, except one, perhaps, besides. He put aside all the loose ears, and he found under them—for it could not move—this wretched lark, with its foot broken, broken by the sickle.”

There was no quiver of her voice or lip as she spoke. I mention this merely because I am not fond of the mere sentiment almost all women infuse into the sufferings of inferior creatures, while those with loftier claims and pains are overlooked. She went on—

“How do you think he took it up? He spread his handkerchief over the stubble, and shelled a grain or two, which he placed within reach of the lark upon the white table-cloth. The lark tried very hard, and hopped with its best foot to reach the grains, then he drew the four corners together, and brought it here to me. I thought it would die, but it has not died; and now it knows me, and has no mind to go away.”

“Does it know him?”

“Not only so, but for him alone will it sing. I let it fly one day when its foot was well, but the next morning I found it outside the window, pecking at its cage-wires, and it said, ‘Take me back again, if you please.’”

“That is like the Chevalier too. But you *are* like him. I suppose it is being so much with him.”

"And yet I never saw him till the first day I saw you, and you had seen him long before. I think it must be dead, it is so still."

Hereupon she uncovered the lark's head; it peeped up, and slowly, with sly scrutiny, hopped back to the peach and began to feed, driving in its little bill. I wanted to know something now, and my curiosity in those days had not so much as received a wholesome check, much less a quietus; and therefore presumptuously demanded—

"Who was the somebody, Fräulein Cerinthia, that might stop to listen to a bird's cry besides the Chevalier? You stopped."

"And that is why you wished to know. I had better have said it in the right place. Did anybody ever tell you you are audacious? It was Florimond Anastase."

"My master!" and I clapped my hands.

"Mine, Sir, if you please."

"But he teaches me the violin."

"And he does not teach me the violin, but is yet my master."

"How—why?"

"I belong to him, or shall."

"Do you mean that you are married to Anastase?"

"Not yet, or I should not be here."

"But you will be?"

"Yes; that is if nothing should happen to prevent our being married."

"You like to be so, I suppose?"

She gazed up and smiled. Her eyes grew liquid, as standing dew. "I will not say you are again audacious, because you are so very innocent. I do wish it."

I said "*Like*—Fräulein Cerinthia."

"You can make a distinction, too. Suppose I said, No."

"I should not believe you, while you look so."

"And if I said, Yes, I dare say you would not believe me either. Dear little Carl, for I must call you little, you are so much less than I—do you really think I would marry, loving music as I do, unless I really loved that which I was to marry more than music?"

So thrilling were her tones in these simple words, of such intensity her deep glance, with its fringe all quivering now, that I was alienated at once from her, the child from the women; yet could like a child have wept, too, when she bent her head and sobbed. Could anything be more beautiful? I thought; and

now, in pausing, my very memory sobs, heavy leaden with pathetic passion. For it was not exactly sorrow, albeit a very woeful bliss. She covered her eyes and gave way a moment; then sweeping off the tears with one hand, she broke into a smile. The shower ceased amidst the sunlight, but still the sunlight served to fling a more peculiar meaning upon the rain-drops—an iris lustre beamed around her eyes. I can but recall that ineffable expression, the April playing over the oriental mould.

“I might have known you would have spoken so, Fräulein Cerinthia,” I responded, at last roused to preternatural comprehension by her words; “but so few people think in that way about those things.”

“You are right, and agree with me, or at least you will one day. But for that, all would be music here; we should have it all *our own way*.”

“You and the Chevalier. Do you know I had forgotten all about your music till this very minute?”

“I am very happy to hear that, because it shows we are to be friends.”

“We have the best authority to be so,” I replied; “and it only seems too good to be true. I am really though mad to hear you sing. Delemann says there never was in Europe a voice like yours, and that its only fault is it is so heavenly that it makes one discontented.”

“That is one of the divinest mistakes ever made, Carlino.”

“The Chevalier calls me Carlomein. I like you to say Carlino, it is so coaxing.”

“You have served me with another of your high authorities, Maestrino. The Chevalier says I have scarcely a voice at all. It is the way I sing he likes.”

“I did not think it possible. And yet, now I come to consider, I don’t think you look so much like a singer as another sort of musician.”

She smiled a little and looked into her lap, but did not reply. It struck me that she was too intuitively modest to talk about herself. But I could not help endeavouring to extort some comment, and I went on.

“I think you look too much like a composer to be a singer also.”

“Perhaps,” she whispered.

I took courage. “Don’t you mean to be a composer, Fräulein Cerinthia?”

"Carlino, yes. The Chevalier says that to act well is to compose."

"But then," I proceeded hastily, "my sister—at least Mr. Davy—at least—you don't know who I mean, but it does not matter; a gentleman, who is very musical, told me and my sister that the original purpose of the drama is defeated in England, and that, instead of bringing the good out of the beautiful, it produces the artificial out of the false—those were his very words; he was speaking of the *music* of operas though, I do remember, and perhaps I made some mistake."

"I should think not."

"In England it is very strange, is it not, that good people, real good people, think the opera a dreadful place to be seen in, and the theatres worse? My sister used to say it was so very unnatural, and it seems so."

"I have heard it is so in England; and really, after all, I don't so much wonder; and, perhaps, it is better for those good people you spoke of to keep away. It is not so necessary for them to go as for us. And this is it, as I have heard—and you will know how, when I have said it to you. Music is the soul of the drama, for the highest drama is the opera—the highest possible is the soul, of course, and so the music should be above the other forms, and they the ministers. But most people put the music at the bottom, and think of it last in this drama. If the music be high, all rise to it; and the higher it is, the higher will all rise. See, the dramatic personification passes naturally into that spiritual height, as the form of those we love, and their fleeting actions fraught with grace, dissolve into our strong perception of the soul we in them love and long for. The lights and shades of scenery cease to have any meaning in themselves, but again are drawn upwards into the concentrated performing souls, and so again pass upwards into the compass of that tonal paradise. But let the music be degraded or weak, and down it will pull performers, performance, and intention, crush the ideal, as persons without music crush *our* ideal—have you not felt? All dramatic music is not thus weak and bad, but much that they use most is vague as well as void. I am repeating to you, Carlino, the very words of the Chevalier; do not think they were my own."

"I did, then, think them very like his words, but I see your thoughts, too, for you would say the same. Is there no music to which you would act, then?"

"Oh, yes! I would act to any music, not because I am vain,

but because I think I could help it upwards a little. Then there is a great deal for us; we cannot quarrel over Mozart and Cimarosa, neither Gluck nor Spohr; and there is one, but I need hardly name him, who wrote 'Fidelio.' And the Chevalier says, if there needed a proof that the highest acting is worthy of the highest music, the highest music of the highest form, or outward guise of love in its utmost loveliness—that opera stands as such. And, further, that all the worst operas, and ill-repute of them in the world, will not weigh against the majesty and purity of Beethoven's own character in the opposing scale."

"Oh, thank you for having such a memory!"

"I have a memory in my memory for those things."

"Yes, I know. Does the Chevalier know you are to marry Anastase?"

"No."

I was surprised at this, though she said it so very simply; she looked serene as that noonday sky, and very soon she went on to say—"Florimond, my friend, is very young, though I look up to him as no one else could believe. I am but fifteen, you know, and have yet been nearly three years betrothed."

"Gracious! You were only a little girl!"

"Not much less than now. I don't think you would ever have called me a little girl, and Florimond says I shall never be a woman. I wished to tell the Chevalier, thinking he would be so good as to congratulate me, and hoping for such a blessing, but I have never found myself able to bring it out of my lips. I always felt it withdrawn, as if I had no reason, and certainly I had no right to confide my personal affairs to him. Our intercourse is so different."

"Yes, I should think so. I wonder what you generally talk about."

"Never yet of anything but music."

"That is strange, because the Chevalier does not usually talk so—but of little things, common things he makes so bright; and Franz tells me, and so did another of our boys, that he only talks of such small affairs generally, and avoids music."

"So I hear from my brother. He talks to Josephine about her doll. He did tell me once that with me alone he 'communed music.'"

"Again his words!"

She assented by her flying smile.

"He never plays to you, then?"

"Never to myself; but then, you see, I should never ask him."

"And he would not do it unless he were asked. I understand that. You feel as I should about asking *you*."

"Me to sing?" she inquired in a tone beguiling, lingering, an echo of *his* voice ever sleepless in my brain, or that if sleeping ever awoke to music. I nodded.

"No," said she again, with quickness; "I will not wait to be asked."

As she spoke she arose, and those dark streams of hair fell off her like some shadow from her spirit—she shone upon me in rising—so seemed her smile. "Oh!" I cried, eagerly, and I caught, by some impulse, the hem of her garment, "you are going to be so good!"

"If you let me be so," she replied, and drew away those folds, passing to her harp. Her hand, suddenly thrown upon the wires, whose resistance to embrace so sweet made all their music—caught the ear of little Josephine, who had been playing very innocently for a prodigy, in the corner, and now she came slowly forwards, her doll in her arms, and stood about a yard from the harp, again putting up one finger to her lip, and giving me a glance across the intervening space. She looked as she so peered, both singular and interesting in the blended curiosity and shyness that appertain to certain childhoods; but it seemed to me at that moment as if she were a strayed earthling into some picture of a scene in that unknown which men call heaven. For the harp and the form which appeared now to have grown to it—so inseparable are the elements of harmony, so intuitively they blend in meeting—were not a sight to suggest anything this side of death. All beauty is the gauge of immortality; and, as I wondered at her utter loveliness, I became calm as immortality only permits and sanctions, when on it our thoughts repose, for it our affections languish. Her arms still rested behind and before the strings as she tuned them; still her hair swept that cloud upon the softness of her cheek, toned the melancholy arch of her brow; but the deep rose-hues of her now drooping mantle, and the Italian azure of her robe, did not retrieve the fancy to any earthly apparition. They seemed but transparent and veil-like media, through which the whiteness of light found way in colours that sheathed an unendurable naked lustre. I thought not in such words, but such thoughts were indeed mine, and while I was yet gazing—dreaming, I should say, for

I ever dream on beauty—she played some long low chords, attenuated, golden, thwarting threads of sound, and began forthwith to sing. She sang in German, and her song was a prayer for rest, a Sunday song, as little Josephine said afterwards to me. But it might have been a lay of revenge, of war, or of woe, for all I heard that the words conveyed; as I could not exist except in the voice itself, or the spirit of which the voice was formed. I felt then that it is not in voice, it is not in cunning instrument, that the thing called music hides; it is the uncreate intelligence of tone that genius breathes into the created elements of sound. This girl's or angel's voice was not so sweet as intelligible, not so boundless as intense. It went straight into the brain, it stirred the soul without disturbing; the ear was unconscious as it entered that dim gallery and rushed through it to the inward sympathetic spirit. The quality of the voice, too, as much pertained to that peculiar organisation as certain scents pertain to particular flowers. It was as in the open air, not in the hothouse, that this foreign flower expanded, and breathed to the sun and wind its secrets. It was what dilettanti call a contralto voice, but such a contralto, too, that either Nature or culture permitted the loftiest flights; the soprano touches were vivid and vibrating as the topmost tones of my violin. While the fragrance yet fanned my soul, the flower shut up. She ceased singing and came to me.

"Do you like that little song? It is the Chevalier's."

"A Sunday song," observed Josephine, as I mentioned.

"A Sunday song!" I cried, and started. "I have not heard a word!"

"Oh!" she said, not regretfully, but with excitement, "you must then hear it again, and Josephine shall sing it, that you may not think of my voice instead of the song."

I had not time to remonstrate, nor had I the right. The child began quite composedly, still holding her doll. She had a wonderful voice. But what have I to do with voices? I mean style. Josephine's voice was crude as a green whortleberry; its sadness was sour, its strength harsh; though a voice shrill and small as the cricket's chirp, with scarcely more music. But she sang divinely; she sang like a cherub before the great white throne.

The manner was her sister's; the fragrance another—a peculiar wood-like odour as from moss and evanescent wild-flowers, if I may so compare, as then it struck me. I listened

to the words this while, to the melody—the rush of melodies—for in that composer's slightest effect each part is a separate soul, the counterpoint a subtle, fiery chain imprisoning the soul in bliss. Ineffable as was that air—ineffable as is every air of his—I longed to be convinced it had been put together by a *man*. I could not, and I cannot to this hour associate anything material with strains of his. When Josephine concluded, I was about to beg for more; but the other left her harp, and kissing her little care, brought her with herself to the couch where she had quitted me. How strange was the sweetness, how sweet the change in her manner now!

"How pale you look!" said she; "I shall give you some wine. I can feel for you, if you are delicate in health, for I am so myself; and it is so sad sometimes."

"No wine, please; I have had wine, and am never the better for it. I believe I was born pale, and shall never look anything else."

"I like you pale, if it is not that you are delicate."

"I think I am pretty strong; I can work hard, and do."

"Do not!" she said, putting her loveliest hand on my hair, and turning my face to hers. "Do not, lieber, work hard—not too hard."

"And why not? for I am sure you do."

"That is the very reason I would have you not do so. I *must* work hard."

"But if you are delicate, Fräulein Cerinthia?"

"God will take care of me. I try to serve Him. None have to answer for themselves as musicians;" she suddenly ceased—passed one hand over her face; she did not stir, but I heard her sigh; she arose, and looked from the window; she sat down again, as if undecided.

"Can I do anything for you?" I asked.

"No, I want nothing; I am only thinking that it is very troublesome the person who sent those fruits could not come instead of them. I ought to have kept it from you, child as you are."

"Child, indeed! why, what are you yourself?"

"Young, very young!" she replied, with some passion in her voice; "but so much older than you are in every sense. I never remember when I did not feel I had lived a long time."

I was struck by these words; for they often returned upon me afterwards, and I rose to go, feeling something disturbed at having wearied her; for she had not the same fresh bloom and

unfatigued brightness as when I entered. She did not detain me, though she said, "Call me Maria, please; I should like it best. We are both so young, you know! We might have been brother and sister." And in this graceful mood my memory carried her away.

CHAPTER XXXIV

I NEED not say I looked upon Anastase with very different eyes next time I crossed his path. He had never so much interested me—he had never attracted me before—he attracted me violently now, but not for his own sake. I watched every movement and gesture—every intimation of his being separable from his musical nature, and dissociated from his playing. He seemed to think me very inattentive on the Monday morning, though, in fact, I had never been so attentive to him before; but I did not get on very well with my work. At last he fairly stopped me, and touched my chin with his bow.

"What are you thinking about this morning, Sir?" he inquired in that easy voice of his, with that cool air.

I never told a lie in my life, white or black. "Of you, Sir," I replied. With his large eyes on mine I felt rather scorched, but still I kept faith with myself. "Of the Fräulein Cerinthia."

"I thought as much. The next Sunday you will remain at home."

"Yes, Sir. But that won't prevent my thinking about you and her."

"Exactly. You shall therefore have sufficient time to think about us. As you have not control to fasten your mind on your own affairs, we must indulge your weakness by giving it plenty of room."

Then he pointed to my page with his bow, and we went on quietly. I need not say we were alone. After my lesson, just before he proceeded to the next violin, he spoke again.

"You do not know, perhaps, what test you are about to endure. We shall have a concert next month, and you will play a first violin with me."

"Sir!" I gasped—"I cannot—I never will!"

"Perhaps you will change your note when you are aware who appointed you. It is no affair of mine."

"If you mean, Sir, that it is the Chevalier who appointed me, I don't believe it, unless you gave your sanction."

He turned upon me with a short smile—just the end of one, and raised his delicate eyebrows. "Be that as it may, to-night we rehearse first, in the lesser hall; there will be nobody present but the band. The Chevalier will hold his own rehearsal the week after next, for there is a work of his on this occasion; therefore we shall prepare, and, I trust, successfully; so that the polishing only will remain for him."

"Bravo, Sir!"

"I hope it will be bravo; but it is no bravo at present," said he, in dismissing me.

I had never heard Anastase play yet, and was very curious. I mean, I had never heard him play consecutively; his exhibitions to us being confined to short passages we could not surmount—bar upon bar, phrase upon phrase, here a little, and there a very little. But now he must needs bring himself before me, to play out his own inner nature.

I found Delemann in his own place presently—a round box, like a diminutive observatory, at the very top of the building, and communicating only with similar boxes occupied by the brass in general. I let myself in; for it would have been absurd to knock amidst the demonstrations of the alto trombone. He was so ardent over that metallic wonder of his, that I had to pluck his sleeve. Even then he would not leave off, at the risk of splitting that short upper lip of his by his involuntary smile, until he had finished what lay before him. It was one great sheet, and I espied at the top the words—"Mer de Glace: Ouverture: Seraphael." Maddered than ever for a conclusion, I stopped my ears till he laid down that shining monster, and took occasion to say—"That is what we are to have to-night."

"I know. But how abominable is Anastase not to let me have my part to practise!"

"Very likely it is not ready. The brass came this morning, and the strings were to follow. Mine was quite damp when I had it."

We went into rehearsal together, Franz and I. What a different rehearsal from my first in England! Here we were all instruments. Franz was obliged to leave me on entering, and soon I beheld him afar off, at the top of the wooden platform, on whose raised steps we stood, taking his place by the tenor trombone—a gentleman of adult appearance, who

had a large mouth. I have my own doubts, private and peculiar, about the superior utility of large mouths, because Franz, of the two, played best; but that is no matter here.

Our saal was a simple room enough, guiltless of ornament; our orchestra deal, clear of paint or varnish; our desks the same; but light as ladies' hand-screens: this was well, as Anastase, who was not without his crotchet, made us continually change places with each other, and we had to carry them about. There were wooden benches all down the saal, but nobody sat in them; there was not the glimmer of a countenance, nor the shine of two eyes. The door-bolts were drawn inside: there was a great and prevalent awe. The lamps hung over us, but not lighted; the sun was a long way from bed yet, and so were we. Anastase kept us at "*L'Amour Fugitif*" and "*Euryanthe*"—I mean, their respective overtures—a good while, and was very quiet all the time, until our emancipation in the "*Mer de Glace*." His *face* did not change even then; but there was a fixity and straightening of the arm as if an iron nerve had passed down it suddenly, and he mustered us still more closely to him and to each other. My stand was next his own, and, looking here and there, I perceived Iskar among the second violins, and was stirred up; for I had not met with him except at table since I came there.

It is not in my power to describe my own sensations on my first introduction to Seraphael's orchestral definite creation. Enough to say, that I felt all music besides, albeit precious, albeit inestimable, to have been but affecting the best and highest portion of myself, but as exciting to loftier aspirations my constant soul. But that *his* creation did indeed not only first affect me beyond all analysis of feeling, but cause upon me, and through me, a change to pass—did first recreate, expurge of all earthly; and then inspire surcharge with heavenly hope and holiest ecstasy. That qualitative heavenly, and this superlative holiest, are alone those which disabuse of the dread to call what we love best and worship truest by name. No other words are expressive of that music which alone realises the desire of faith—faith supernal alike with the universal faith of love.

As first awoke the strange smooth wind-notes of the opening *adagio*, the fetterless chains of ice seemed to close around my heart. The movement had no blandness in its solemnity; and so still and shiftless was the grouping of the harmonies, that a frigidity actual, as well as ideal, passed over my pores, and

hushed my pulses. After a hundred such tense, yet clinging chords, the sustaining calm was illustrated, not broken, by a serpentine phrase of one lone oboe, pianissimo over the piano surface, which it crisped not; but on and above which it breathed like the track of a sunbeam aslant from a parted cloud. The slightest possible retardation at its close brought us to the refrain of the simple adagio, interrupted again by a rush of violoncello notes, rapid and low, like some sudden under-current striving to burst through the frozen sweetness. Then spread wide the subject, as plains upon plains of *water-land*; though the time was gradually increased. Amplifications of the same harmonies introduced a fresh accession of violoncelli, and oboi contrasted artfully in syncopation, till at length the strides of the accelerando gave a glittering precipitation to the entrance of the second and longest movement.

Then Anastase turned upon me, and with the first bar we fell into a tumultuous presto. Far beyond all power to analyse as it was just then, the complete idea embraced me as instantaneously as had the picturesque chillness of the first. I have called it tumultuous—but merely in respect of rhythm—the harmonies were as clear and evolved as the modulation itself was sharp, keen, unanticipated, unapproachable. Through every bar reigned that vividly enunciated ideal, whose expression pertains to the one will alone in any age—the ideal that, binding together in suggestive imagery every form of beauty, symbolises and represents something beyond them all.

Here over the surge-like, but fast-bound motivo—only like those tossed ice-waves, dead still in their heaped-up crests—were certain swelling crescendoes of a second subject, so unutterably, if vaguely sweet, that the souls of all deep blue Alp-flowers, the clarity of all high blue skies, had surely passed into them, and was passing from them again.

Scarcely is it legitimate to describe what so speaks for itself as music, yet there are assuredly effects produced by music, which may be treated of to the satisfaction of the initiated.

It was not until the very submerging climax that the playing of Anastase was recalled to me. Then, amidst long ringing notes of the wild horns, and intermittent sighs of the milder wood, swept from the violins a torrent of coruscant arpeggi, and above them all I heard his tone, keen but solvent, as his bow seemed to divide the very strings with fire; and I felt

as if some spark had fallen upon my fingers to kindle mine. As soon as it was over, I looked up and laughed in his face with sheer pleasure; but he made no sign, nor was there the slightest evidence of the strenuous emotion to which he had been abandoned—no flush of cheek nor flash of eye—only the least possible closer contraction of the slight lips. He did nothing but find fault, and his authority appeared absolute; for when he reprimanded Iskar in particular, and called him to account for the insertion extraordinary of a queer appogiatu-*ra*, which I did not know he had heard, that evil one came down without a smirk, and minced forth some apology, instead of setting up his crest as usual. I was very thankful at last when the room was cleared, as it was infernally hot, and I had made up my mind to ask Anastase whether my violin were really such a good one; for I had not used it before this night.

When no one was left except he and I, I ventured to ask him whether I could carry anything anywhere for him, to attract his attention.

“Yes,” said he; “you may gather up all the parts and lay them together in that closet,” pointing to a wooden box behind the platform; “but do not put your own away, because you are going to look over it with me.”

I did as he directed, and then brought myself back to him. But before I could begin, he took my fiddle from my arms, and turning it round and round, demanded, “Where did you get this?” I told him in a few words its history, or what I imagined to be its history. He looked rather astonished, but made no comment, and then he began to play to me. I do not suppose another ever played like him; I may, perhaps, myself a very little, but I never heard anybody else. The peculiar strength of his tone I believe never to have been surpassed; the firmness of his cantabile never equalled; his expression in no case approached. Santonio’s playing dwindled in my mind, for Anastase, though so young, performed with a pointedness altogether mature; it was that on which to repose unshifting security for the most ardent musical interest; yet, with all its solidity, it was not severe even in the strictest passages. Of all playing I ever heard on my adopted instrument, and I have heard every first-rate and every medium performer in Europe, it was the most forceful: let this term suffice just here. I said to him when he had finished with me, “How much fuller your playing is than Santonio’s! I thought his wonderful until I heard yours.” But with more gentleness

than I had given him credit for, he responded, laying down my little treasure, "I consider his playing myself far more wonderful than mine. Mine is not wonderful; it is a wrong word to use. It is full, because I have studied to make it the playing of a leader, which must not follow its own vagaries. Neither does Santonio, who is also a leader, but a finer player than I—finer in the sense of delicacy, experience, finish. Now go and eat your supper, Auchester."

"Sir, I don't want any supper."

"But I do, and I cannot have you here."

I knew he meant he was going to practise; it was always his supper I found; but he had become again unapproachable. I had not gained an inch nearer ground to him, really, yet. So I retired and slipped into the refectory, where Franz was keeping a seat for me.

I was positively afraid to go out the next Sunday, and the next it rained—we all stayed in. On the following Wednesday would come our concert, and by this time I knew that the Chevalier would be accompanied by certain of his high-born relations. But do not imagine that we covered for them galleries with cloth and yellow fringe. It was altogether to me one of my romance days; and, as such, I partook in the spirit of festivity that stirred abroad. The day before was even something beyond romance. After dinner we all met in the garden-house, as we called the pillared alcove, to arrange the decorations for our hall, which were left entirely to ourselves, at our united request. About fifty of us were of one mind, and, somehow or other, I got command of the whole troop; I am sure I did not mean to put myself so. I sent out several in different directions to gather oak-branches and lime-boughs, vine-leaves and evergreens, and then sat down to weave garlands for the arches amongst a number more. Having seen them fairly at work, I went forth myself, and found Maria Cerinthia at home; she came with me directly, and we made another pilgrimage in search of roses and myrtles. Josephine went too, and we all three returned laden from the garden of a sincere patroness down in the valley beneath the hill, of whom we had asked such alms.

Entering Cecilia, after climbing the slope leisurely, we saw a coach at the porter's door; the door where letters and messages were received, not the grand door of the school, which all day stood open for the benefit of bustling Cecilians. I thought nothing of this coach, however, as one often might have seen

one there; but while Maria took back Josephine, I obtained possession of all the flowers which she had placed in my arms, promising to be with us anon in the garden-house. Past the professors' rooms I walked; and I have not yet mentioned the name of Thauch, our nominal superintendent, the appointed of the Chevalier, who always laughingly declared he had selected him because he knew nothing about music, to care for us *out* of music. Thauch sat at the head of the middle table, and we scarcely saw him otherwise or spoke to him; thus I was astonished, and rather appalled to be called upon by him when I reached his room, which was enclosed, and where he was writing accounts. I was not aware he even knew my name; but by it he called upon me. "Sir!" I said; "what do you want?" as I did not desire to halt, for fear of crushing up my sweet fresh roses. He had risen, and was in the doorway, waiting with true German deliberation until I was quite recovered from my breathlessness, and then he did not answer, but took my shoulders and pushed me into his parlour, himself leaving the room, and shutting himself out into the passage.

Shall I ever forget it? For gasping still, though I had thrown all my flowers out of my arms, I confronted the bright, old-fashioned, distinct, yet dream-like faces of two who sat together upon the chairs behind the door. You will not expect me to say how I felt when I found they were my own sister Millicent, my own Lenhart Davy; and that they did not melt away. I suppose I did something—put out my hands, perhaps, or turned some strange colour which made Davy think I should faint; for he rose, and coming to me, with his hilarious laugh, put his arms about me, and took me to my sister. When once she had kissed me, and I had felt her soft face and the shape of her lips, and smelt the scent of an Indian box at home that clung to her silk handkerchief yet, I cried, and she cried too, but we were both quiet enough about it; she, I only knew, was crying by her cheek pressing wet against mine. After a few moments so unutterable, I put myself away from her, and began distinctly to perceive the strangeness of our position. Millicent, as I examined her, seemed to have grown more a woman than I remembered; but that may have pertained to her dress, so different from the style with which I associated her—the white ribbons and plain caps under the quaint straw bonnet, and the black silk spencer. Now, she wore a mantle of very graceful cut, and the loveliest

pink lining to her delicate fancy hat; this gave to her oval countenance a blushful clearness that made her look lovely in my eyes. And when I did speak, what do you think I said? "Oh, Millicent! how odd it is! Oh, Mr. Davy! how odd you look!"

"Now, Charles!" said he, in answer—and how the English accents thrilled the tears into my eyes—"now, Charles! tell me what you mean by growing so tall, and being so self-possessed. You are above my shoulder, and you have lost all your impudence."

"No, Mr. Davy, I haven't—kiss me!" said I; and I threw my arms about him, and clung on there till curiosity swelled unconquerable.

"Oh, Mr. Davy! how extraordinary it is of you to come so suddenly, without telling me. And mother never said the least word about it. Oh, Millicent! how did you get her to let you come? and, oh!"—suddenly it struck me very forcibly—"how very strange you should come with Mr. Davy! Is anybody ill? No, you would have told me directly, and you would not be dressed so."

Millicent looked up at Davy with an unwonted expression; a new light in her eyes, that had ever slept in shade; and he laughed again.

"No, nobody is ill, and she would *not* be dressed so if I had not given her that bonnet, for which she scolded me instead of thanking me—for it came from Paris."

"Oh!" I exclaimed, and I felt all over bathed in delight. I ran to Millicent, and whispered into that same bonnet—"Oh, Millicent! are you married to Mr. Davy?"

She pulled off one of her pale-coloured gloves, and showed me the left hand. I saw the ring—oh, how strangely I felt! hot and cold; glad and sorry; excited, and yet staid. I flew to my first friend, and kissed his hand: "Dear Mr. Davy, I am so glad!"

"I thought you would be, Charles. If I had anticipated any objection on your part, I should have written to you first!"

"Oh, Mr. Davy," I cried, laughing, "but why did they not write, and tell me?"

"My dear brother, it was that we wished to spare you all disappointment."

"You mean I could not have come home. No, I don't think I could—even for your wedding, Millicent, and yours, Mr. Davy. We have been so busy lately."

Davy laughed: "Oh, I see what an important person you have become. We knew it; and it was I who persuaded your mother not to unsettle you. I did it for the best."

"It was for the best, dearest Charles," said Millicent, looking into Davy's face, as if perfectly at home with it. She had never used to look into his face at all.

"Oh!" I again exclaimed, suddenly reminded, "what did you wear, Millicent, to be married in?"

"A white muslin pelisse, Charles, and Miss Benette's beautiful veil."

"Yes; and, Charles," continued Davy, "Millicent gratified us both by asking Miss Benette to be her bridesmaid."

"And did she come?" I asked, rather eagerly.

"No, Charles. She did not."

"I knew she would not," I thought, though I scarcely knew why.

"But she came, Charles, the night before, and helped them to dress the table; and so beautiful she made it look, that everybody was astonished; yet she had only a few garden flowers, and a *very* few rare ones."

"But how long have you been married, Mr. Davy? and are you going to live *here*? What will the class do? Oh, the dear class! Who sits by Miss Benette now, Mr. Davy?"

He laughed.

"Oh, Charles, if you please, one question at a time. We have been married one week. Is it not, Millicent?"

She smiled and blushed.

"And I am not going to leave my class. It is larger now than you remember it; and I have not left my little house; but I have made one more room, and we find it quite wide enough to contain us."

"Oh, Sir; then you came here for a trip! How delicious! Oh, Millicent, do you like Germany? Oh, you will see the Chevalier."

"Well, Charles, it is only fair; for we have heard so much about him. Nothing in your letters but the Chevalier, and the Chevalier, and we do not even know his name from *you*. Clo says whenever your letters come, 'I wish he would tell us how he sleeps;' and my mother hopes that Seraphael is 'a good man,' as you are so fond of him."

"But, Charles," added Davy, with his old earnestness, and with a sparkling eye, "how, then, shall we see him, and where? For I would walk barefoot through Germany for that end."

"Without any trouble, Mr. Davy, because to-morrow will be our concert, and he is coming to conduct his new overture—only his new overture, mind! He will sit in the hall most part, and you will see him perfectly."

"My dear, dear Charles," observed Millicent, "it is something strange to hear you say 'our concert.' How entirely you have fulfilled your destiny! And shall we hear you play?"

"Yes," I replied, with mock modesty, but in such a state of glowing pride, that it was quite as much as I could do to answer with becoming indifference. "Yes, I am to play a first violin."

"A first violin! Charles?" said Davy, evidently surprised. "What, already? Oh, I did not predict wrong! What if I had kept you in my class? But, Millicent, we must not stay," he added, turning to her; "we only came to carry Charles away, as we are here on forbidden ground."

"Not at all, Mr. Davy," I cried, eager to do the honours of Cecilia. "A great many of them go out to see their friends, and have their friends come to see them; but I had no one until now, you see."

"Yes; but, Charles," replied my sister, "we understand that no visitors are permitted entrance the day before a concert, and thought it a wise regulation, too. They made an exception in our case, because we came so far, and also because we came to take you away."

"Where are we going, then? Going away?"

"Only to the inn, where we have a bed for you engaged, that we may see something of you out of study. You must go with us now, for we have obtained permission."

"Whatever shall I do?"

"What now, Charles?"

"Well, Mr. Davy, you may laugh; but we are to decorate our concert-hall, and they are waiting for me, I dare say. All those flowers, too, that you made me throw down, were for garlands. If I might only go, and tell them how it is——"

"See, Charles, there is some one wanting to speak to *you*. I heard a knock."

I turned, and let in Franz. He could not help glancing at the pink lining, while he breathlessly whispered, "Do not mind us. Fräulein Cerinthia is gone to fetch her brother; and while they are at supper, we shall dress the hall under her directions, and she says you are to go with your friends."

"That is my sister, Delemann," said I, and then I introduced them, quite forgetting that Millicent had changed her name,

which amused them immensely after Franz was gone, having gathered up my roses, and taken them off. Then Davy begged me to come directly, and I hurried to my room, and took him with me. How vain I felt to show him my press, my screen, my portmanteau full of books, and my private bed—my violin, asleep in its case; and, last, not least, his china cup and saucer, in the little brown box! While I was combing my hair, he stood and watched me with delight in his charming countenance—not a cloud upon it.

“Oh, dear Mr. Davy, how exquisite it is that you should be my brother! I shall never be able to call you anything but Mr. Davy, though.”

“You shall call me whatever you please. I shall always like it.”

“And, Sir, please to tell me, am I tidy? Fit to walk with a bride and bridegroom?”

“Not half smart enough! Your sister has brought your part of the wedding ceremony in her only box; and, let me tell you, Charles, you are highly favoured; for the muslin dresses and laces will suffer in consequence!”

“I don’t believe that, Sir,” said I, laughing.

“And why not, Sir?”

“Because, sir, my sisters would none of them travel about with muslin dresses, if they had only one box.”

“They would travel about, as Mrs. Davy does, in black silk,” answered Davy, pursuing me as I ran, but I escaped him, and rejoined Millicent first, who was waiting for us with all possible patience.

There are a few times of our life—not the glorious eternal days, that stand alone—but, thank God! many hours which are nothing for us but pure and passive enjoyment, in which we exist. How exquisitely happy was I on this evening, for example! The prospect of the morrow so intensely bright—the present of such tender sweetness! How divine is Love in all its modifications! How inseparable is it from repose—from rapture!

As we went along the village, and passed the shops, in the freshening sunbeams, low-shining from the bare, blue heaven, I fetched a present for my brother and sister, in the shape of two concert tickets, which, contrary to Tedescan custom, were issued for the advantage of any interested strangers. I put them into Millicent’s hand, saying, “You know I gave you no wedding gift.”

"Yes, Charles, you gave me this;" and she looked up at Davy. "I should never have known him but for you."

"Which means, my love, that I am also to thank Charles for introducing me to you;" and Davy took off his hat with mock reverence.

"Oh, that won't do, Mr. Davy; for you said you had seen a beautiful Jewess at our window before you knew who lived in our house; and, of course, you would have got in there somehow, at last."

"*Never!*" said Davy, in a manner that convinced me he never would.

"Then I *am* very glad," said I; "glad that I ran away one morning. The Chevalier says that nothing happens accidentally to such as I."

They laughed till they saw how serious I had grown again, and then smiled at each other. Arrived at our inn, we rested. Will it be believed that Davy had brought some of his own tea, besides several other small comforts? This much amused me. After our tea—a real home tea, which quite choked my unaccustomed faculties, at first—Davy put his wife on the sofa, and, with a bright authority there was no resisting, bade her be still, while he fetched my part of the ceremony. This consisted of half a dozen pairs of beautiful white kid gloves—treasures these, indeed, to a fiddler!—a white silk waistcoat, a small case of Spanish chocolate, and a large cake, iced and almonded.

"That was made at home, Charles," said Millicent; "and is exactly like that we sent to our friends."

In those days it was not old fashion, gentle reader, to send out bride cake to one's friends. I need only mention a white favour or two, and a frosted silver flower, because I reserved the same for Josephine Cerinthia.

CHAPTER XXXV

In my box-bed at that flower-baptised inn, I certainly did not sleep so well as in my own nest at school. Here it was in a box, as ever in that country of creation; and in the middle of the night I sat up to wonder whether my sister and new-found brother thought the locale as stifling as I did. I was up before the sun, and dressed together with his arrangement of his beams. We had—in spite of the difficulty to get served in

rational fashion—a right merry breakfast, thanks to the company and the tea. I had not tasted such, as it appeared to me, since my infancy.

How Davy did rail against the toilette shortcomings—the meagre, shallow depths of his basin! And he was not happy until I took him to my portion (as we called our sleeping-places at Cecilia), and let him do as he pleased with my own water-magazine. This was an artificial lake of red ware, which was properly a baking-dish, and which I had purchased under that name for my private need. If it had not been for the little river which flowed not half a mile from our school, and which our Cecilians haunted as a bath through summer, I could not answer, in my memory's conscience, for their morality, if, as I of course believe, cleanliness be next to godliness.

After breakfast, and after I had taken Davy back, I returned myself alone to seek Maria, and escort her. Davy and Millicent seemed so utterly indisposed to stir out until it was necessary, and so unfit for any society but each other's, that I did not hesitate to abscond. I left them together—Davy lazier than I had ever seen him, and *she* more like brilliant evening than unexcited morning. What am I writing? Is morning ever unexcited to the enthusiast? I think his only repose is in the magical supervention of the mystery night brings to his heart.

I was sorry to find that neither Maria, Josephine, nor Joseph were at home. The way was clear upstairs, but all the doors were locked, as usual, when they were out; and I went on to Cecilia in a pet. It was nine when I arrived—quite restored. Our concert was to be at ten.

What different hours are kept in Germany!—what different hearts cull the honey of the hours! Our dining-hall was full; there was a great din. Our garden-house was swept and garnished as I remembered it the day I came with one; but not quite so enticing in its provisions—that is to say, there were no strawberries, which had been so interesting to me on the first occasion. I retreated to the library. No one was there. I might not go among the girls, whose establishment was apart. But I knew I should meet them before we had to take our places; and off I scampered to Franz's observatory. Will it be believed, he was still at work? those brass lips embracing his, already dressed, his white gloves lying on his monster's cradle.

"My dear Delemann," I exclaimed, "for pity's sake, put that down now!"

“ My dear Carl, how shall I feel when that moment comes? ” pointing to the up-beat of bar 109, where he first came in upon the field of the score.

“ I don’t think you will feel differently if you practise only half-an-hour more, any how.”

“ Yes, I shall; I want rubbing up. Besides, I have been here since six.”

“ Oh, Delemann, you are a good boy. But I don’t feel nervous at all.”

“ You, Carl! No, I should think not. You will have no more responsibility than the hand of a watch, with that Anastase for the spring—works, too, that never want winding up, and that were bought ready-made by our patroness.”

“ Dear Franz, do come. I am dying to see the hall.”

“ I don’t think it is done. Fräulein Cerinthia went out to get some white roses, for a purpose she held secret. The boughs are all up, though.”

“ My dear Franz, you are very matter-of-fact.”

“ No, I am not, Carl. The tears ran down my face at rehearsal.”

“ That was because I made a mouth at you, which you wanted to laugh at, and dared not.”

“ Well,” said Franz, mock mournfully, “ I can do nothing with you here. So come.”

He rolled up his monster, and took up his gloves. I had a pair of Millicent’s in my pocket.

“ We must not forget to call at the garden-house for a rose to put here,” said Franz, running his slight forefinger into his button-hole. We accordingly went in there. A good many had preceded us, and rifled the baskets of roses, pinks, and jessamine, that stood about. While we were turning over those still left, up came somebody, and whispered that Anastase was bringing in the Cerinthias. I eagerly gazed, endeavouring, with all my might, to look innocent of so gazing. But I only beheld, between the pillars, the clear brow and waving robes of my younger master, as he bent so lowly before a maiden, raimented in white, and only as he left her; for he entered not within the alcove. As he retreated, Maria advanced. She was dressed in white, as I have said; but so dazzling was her beauty, that all eyes were bent upon her. All the chorus-singers were in white; but who looked the least like her? With the deep azure of our order folded around her breast, and on that breast a single full white rose—with that

dark hair bound from the arch of her delicate forehead, she approached, and presented us each also with a single rose, exquisite as her own, from the very little basket I had carried to her that Sunday, now quite filled with the few flowers it contained. "They are so fresh," said she, "that they will not die the whole morning!" And I thought, as I saw her, that nothing in the whole realm of flowers was so beautiful, or just then so fresh, as herself.

A very little while now, and our conductor, Zittermayer, the superior in age of Anastase, but his admirer and sworn ally, came in, and ordered the chorus forwards. They having dispersed, he returned for ourselves—the gentry of the band. As soon as I aspired through the narrow orchestra door, I beheld the same sight in front as from the other end at the day of my initiation into those sceneries; or very much the same—the morning sun, which gleamed amidst the leafy arches, and in the foreground on many a rosy garland. For over the seats reserved for the Chevalier and his party, the loveliest flowers, relieved with myrtle only, hung in rich festoons; and, as a keystone to the curtained entrance below the orchestra, the Cecilia picture—framed in virgin roses by Maria's hand—showed only less fair than she! At once did this flower-work form a blooming barrier between him and the general audience, and illustrate his exclusiveness by a fair, if fading, symbol.

The hall had begun to fill; and I was getting rather nervous about my English brother and sister, who could not sit together, however near, when they entered, and found just the seats I could have chosen for them. Millicent, at the side of the chamber, was just clear of the flowery division; for I gesticulated violently at her to take such place.

I felt so excited then, seeing them down there—of all persons those I should have most desired in those very spots—that I think I should have burst into tears, but for a sudden and fresh diversion. While I had been watching my sister and brother, a murmur had begun to roll amidst the gathered throng, and just as the conductor came to the orchestra steps, at the bottom he arrested himself. The first stroke of ten had sounded from our little church; and, simultaneously with that stroke, the steward, bearing on his wand the blue rosette and bunch of oak-leaves, threw open the curtain of the archway under us, and ushered into the appropriated space the party for whose arrival we auspiciously waited. I said Zittermayer

arrested himself—he waited respectfully until they were seated, and then bowed, but did not advance to salute them further. They also bowed, and he mounted the steps.

I was enchanted at the decorum which prevailed at that moment; for, as it happened, it was a more satisfactory idea of homage than the most unmitigated applause on the occasion. The perfect stillness also reigned through Cherubini's overture, not one note of which I heard, though I played as well as any somnambule, for I need scarcely say I was looking at that party; and, being blessed with a long sight, I saw as well as it was possible to see all that I required to behold.

First in the line sat a lady, at once so stately and so young-looking, that I could only conjecture she was, as she was, *his* mother. A woman was she like, in the outlines of her beauty, to the Medicis and Colonnas, those queens of historic poesy; unlike in that beauty's aspect which was beneficent as powerful, though I traced no trait of semblance between her and her super-terrestrial son. She sat like an empress, dressed in black, with a superb eye-glass, one star of diamonds at its rim, in her hand; but still and stately, and unsmiling as she was, she was ever turned slightly towards him, who, placed by her side, almost nestled into the sable satin of her raiment. He was also dressed in black, this day; and held in those exquisite hands a tiny pair of gloves, which he now swung backwards and forwards in time to the movement of our orchestra, and then let fall upon the floor; when that stately mother would stoop and gather them up, and he would receive them with a flashing smile, to drop them again with inadvertence, or perhaps to slide into them his slender fingers. Hardly had I seen and known him, before I saw and recognised another close beside him. If *he* were small and sylphid, seated by his majestic mother, how tiny was that delicate satellite of his, who was nestled as close to his side as he to hers. It was my own, my little Starwood; so happily attired in a dove-coloured dress, half frock, half coat, trimmed with silver buttons, and holding a huge nosegay in his morsels of hands. I had scarcely time to notice him after the first flush of my surprise; but it was impossible to help seeing that my pet was as happy as he could well be, and that he was quite at home.

Next Starwood was a brilliant little girl with long hair, much less than he, nursing a great doll exquisitely dressed; and, again, nearest the doll and the doll's mamma, I perceived a lady and a pair of gentlemen, each of whom, as to size, would

have made two Seraphaels. They were all very attentive, apparently, except the Chevalier; and though he was still by fits, I knew he was not attending, from the wandering, wistful gaze, now in the roof, now out at the windows, now downcast, shadowy, and anon flinging its own brightness over my soul, like a sunbeam astray from the heavens of Paradise. When at length the point in the programme, so dearly longed for, was close at hand, he slid beneath the flowery balustrade, and as noiselessly as in our English music-hall, he took the stairs, and leaned against the desk until the moment for taking possession. Then when he entered, still so inadvertent, the applause broke out, gathering, rolling, prolonging itself, and dissolving like thunder in the mountains.

I especially enjoyed the fervent shouts of Anastase; his eye as clear as fire, his strict frame relaxed. Almost before it was over, and as if to elude further demonstrations, though he bowed with courteous calmness, Seraphael signed to us to begin. Then, midst the delicious, yet heart-wringing ice tones, shone out those beaming lineaments; the same peculiar and almost painful keenness turned upon the sight the very edge of beauty. Fleeting from cheek to brow the rosy lightnings, his very heart's flushes were as the mantling of a sudden glory.

But of his restless and radiant eyes I could not bear the stressful brightness, it dimmed my sight; whether dazzled or dissolved I know not. And yet, will it be believed? affectionate, earnest, and devoted as was the demeanour of those about me, no countenance glistened except my own in that atmosphere of bliss. Perhaps I misjudge; but it appears to me that pure Genius is as unrecognisable in human form as was pure Divinity: I encroach upon such a subject no further. To feel, to feel exquisitely, is the lot of very many; it is the charm that lends a superstitious joy to fear: but to appreciate belongs to the few—to the one or two alone here and there; the blended passion and understanding that constitute, in its essence, worship.

I did not wonder half so much at the strong delight of the audience in the composition. How many there are who *perceive* art as they perceive beauty—perceive the fair in Nature, the pure in science—but receive not that these intimate and symbolise; how much more fail in realising the Divine ideal, the soul beyond the sight—the ear!

Here, besides, there were plenty of persons weary with

mediocre impressions, and the effect upon them was as the fresh sea-breeze to the weakling, or the sight of green fields after trackless deserts. I never, never can have enough—is *my* feeling when that exalted music overbrims my heart; sensation is trebled; the soul sees double, it is as if, brooding on the waste of harmony, the spirit met its shadow, like the swan, and embraced it as itself. I do not know how the composition went, I was so lost in the author's brightness face to face; but I never knew anything go ill under his direction. The sublimity of the last movement, so sudden, yet complete in its conclusion, left the audience in a trance; the spell was not broken for a minute and a half, and then burst out a tremendous call for a repeat. But woe to those fools, thought I. It was already too late: with the mystical modesty of his nature, Seraphael had flown downstairs, forgetting the time-stick, which he held in his hand still, and which he carried with him through the archway. As soon as it was really felt he had departed, a great cry for him was set up, all in vain; and a deputation from the orchestra was instructed to depart and persuade him to return: such things were done in Germany in those days. Anastase was at the head of this select few, but returned together with them discomfited; no Seraphael being, as they asserted, to be found. Anastase announced this fact, in his rare German, to the impatient audience; not a few of whom were standing upright on the benches, to the end that they might make more clatter with their feet than on the firmer floor. As soon as all heard, there was a great groan; and some stray hisses sounded like the erection of a rattlesnake or two; but upon second thoughts, the people seemed to think they should be more likely to find him if they dispersed; though what they meant to do with him when they came upon him I could not conjecture: so vulgar did any homage appear as an offering to that fragrant soul. My dear Millicent and her spouse waited patiently, though they looked about them with some curiosity, till the crowd grew thin; and then, as the stately party underneath me made a move and disappeared through the same curtain that had closed over Seraphael, I darted downwards past the barrier, and climbed the intervening forms to my sister and brother. Great was my satisfaction to stand there and chatter with them; but presently Davy suggested our final departure, and I recollected to have left my fiddle in the orchestra, not even sheltered by its cradle, but where every dust could insult its face.

"Stay here," I begged them, "and I will run and put it by; I will not keep you waiting five minutes."

"Fly! my dear boy," cried Davy, "and we will wait until you return, however long you stay."

I did not *mean* to stay more than five minutes, nor should I have delayed, but for my next adventure. When I came to my door, which I reached in breathless haste, lo! it was fastened within, or at least would not be pulled open. I was cross, for I was in a hurry and very curious too; so I set down my violin, to bang and push against the door. I had given it a good kick, almost enough to fracture the panel, when a voice came creeping through that darkness, "Only wait one little moment, and don't knock me down, please!" I knew that voice, and stood stoned with delight to the spot, while the bolt slid softly back in some velvet touch, and the door was opened. "Oh, Sir!" I cried, as I saw the Chevalier, looking at that instant more like some darling child caught at its pretty mischief, than the commanding soul of myriads, "Oh, Sir! I beg your pardon. I did not know you were here."

"I did not suppose so," he answered, laughing brightly. "I came here because I knew the way, and because I wanted to be out of the way. It is I who ought to beg *thy* pardon, Carlomein."

"Oh, Sir! to think of your coming into my room; I shall always like to think you came. But if I had only known you were here I would not have interrupted you."

"And I, had I known thou wouldst come, should not have bolted thy door. But I was afraid of Anastase, Carlomein."

"Afraid of Anastase, Sir! of *Anastase*?" I could find no other words.

"Yes, I am of Anastase even a little afraid."

"Oh, Sir! don't you like him?" I exclaimed; for I remembered Maria's secret.

"My child," said the Chevalier, "he is as near an angel as artist can be, a ministering spirit; but yet I tell thee, I fear before him. He is so still, severe, and perfect."

"Perfect!—perfect before *you*!—"

I could have cried; but a restraining spell was on my soul—a spell I could not resist nor appreciate, but in whose after revelation the reason shone clear of that strange, unwonted expression in Seraphael's words. Thus, instead, I went on, "Sir, I understand why you came here, that they might not

persecute you; and I don't wonder, for they are dreadfully noisy; but, Sir, they did not mean to be rude."

"It is I who have been rude, if it were such a thing at all; but it is not; and now let me ask after what I have not forgotten, thy health."

"Sir, I am very well, I thank you; and you, Sir?"

"I never was so well, thank God! and yet, Carlomein, thy cheek is thinner."

"Oh, that is only because I grow so tall. My sister, who is just come from England——" Here I suddenly arrested myself, for my unaddress stared me in the face. He just laid his little hand on my hair, and smiled inquiringly, "Oh, tell me about thy sister."

"Sir, she said I looked so very well."

"That's good; but about her. Is she young and pretty?"

"Sir, she is a very darling sister to me, but not pretty at all, only very interesting; and she is very young to be married."

"She is married, then?" He smiled still more inquiringly.

"Yes, Sir, she is married to Mr. Davy, my musical godfather."

"I remember; and this Mr. Davy, is he here too?" He left off speaking, and sat upon the side of my bed, tucking up one foot like a little boy.

"Yes, Sir,"

"And now, I shall ask thee a favour."

"What is that, sir?"

"That thou wilt let me see her, and speak to her; I want to tell her what a brother she has. Not only so, to invite her—do not be shy, Carlomein—to my birthday feast."

"Oh, Sir!" I exclaimed; and, regardless of his presence, I threw myself into the very length of my bed, and covered my face.

"Now, if *thou* wilt come to my feast, is another question. I have not reached that yet."

"But please to reach it, Sir!" I cried, rendered doubly audacious by joy.

"But thou wilt have some trouble in coming; shalt thou be afraid? Not only to dance and eat sugar-plums?"

"It is all the better, Sir, if I have something to do; I am never so well as then."

"But thy sister must come to see thee. She must not meddle, nor the godpapa either."

"Oh! sir, Mr. Davy could not meddle; and he would rather stay with Millicent; but he does sing so beautifully."

He made no answer, but with wayward grace he started up.

"I think they are all gone. Cannot we now go? I am afraid of losing my *queen*."

"Sir, who is she?"

"Cannot it be imagined by thee?"

"Well, Sir, I only know of *one*."

"Thou art right. A queen is only *one*, just like any other lady. Come, say thou the name; it is a virgin name, and stills the heart like solitude."

"I don't think that does still."

"Ah! thou hast found that, too!"

"Sir, you said you wished to go."

He opened the door, the lock of which he had played with as he stood, and I ran out first.

The pavilion was crowded. "Oh, dear!" said Seraphael, a little piqued, "it's exceedingly hot. Canst thou contrive to find thy friends in all this fuss? I cannot find *mine*."

"Sir, my brother and sister were to wait for me in the concert hall; they cannot come here, you know, Sir. If I knew your friends, I think I could find them, even in this crowd."

"No," answered the Chevalier, decisively, as he cast his brilliant eyes once round the room, "I know they are not here. I do not *feel* them. Carlomein, I am assured they are in the garden. For one thing, they could not breathe here."

"Let us go to them to the garden."

He made way instantly, gliding through the assembly, so that they scarcely turned a head. We were soon on the grass—so fresh after the autumn rains. Crossing that green, we entered the lime-walk. The first person I saw was Anastase. He was walking lonely, and looking down, as he rarely appeared. So abstracted, indeed, was he, that we might have walked over him, if Seraphael had not forced me by a touch to pause, and waited until he should approach to our hand.

"See!" said the Chevalier, gleefully, "how solemn he is. No strange thing, Carlomein, that I should be afraid of him. I wonder what he is thinking of! He has quite a countenance for a picture."

But Anastase had reached us before I had time to say, as I intended, "I know of what he is thinking."

He arrested himself suddenly, with a grace that charmed from his cool demeanour, and swept off his cap involuntarily. Holding it in his hand, and raising his serious gaze, he seemed waiting for the voice of the Chevalier. But, to my surprise,

he had to wait several moments, during which they both regarded each other. At last Seraphael fairly laughed.

"Do you know, I had forgotten what I had to say, in contemplating you? It is what I call a musical phiz, yours."

Anastase smiled slightly, and then shut up his lips, but a sort of flush tinged his cheeks I thought.

"Perhaps, Auchester, you can remind the Chevalier Seraphael."

I was so irritated at this observation that I kicked the gravel and dust, but did not trust myself to speak.

"Oh!" exclaimed Seraphael, quickly, "it was to request of you a favour—a favour I should not dare to ask you unless I had heard what I heard to-day, and seen what I saw."

It might have been my fancy, but it struck me that the tones were singularly at variance with the words, here. A suppressed disdain breathed underneath his accent.

"Sir," returned Anastase, with scarcely more warmth, "it is impossible but that I shall be ready to grant any favour in my power. I rejoice to learn that such a thing is so. I shall be much indebted if you can explain it to me at once, as I have to carry a message from Spoda to the Fräulein Cerinthia."

Spoda was Maria's master for the voice.

"Let us turn back, then," exclaimed Seraphael, adroitly. "I will walk with you wherever you may be going, and tell you on the way." Seraphael's "I will" was irresistible, even to Anastase.

I suddenly remembered my relations, who would imagine I had gone to a star on speculation. It was too bad of me to have left them all that time. My impression that Seraphael had to treat at some length with my master, induced me to say, "Sir, I have left my brother and sister ever so long, I must run to them, I think."

"Run, then," said the Chevalier; "thou certainly shouldst, and tell them what detained thee. But return to me, and bring them with thee."

I conceived this could not be done, and said so.

"I will come to thee, then, in perhaps half an hour. But if thou canst not wait so long, go home with thy dear friends and I will write thee a letter."

I would have given something for a letter, it is true, but I secretly resolved to wait all day rather than not see him instead, and rather than *they* should not see him.

I ran off at full speed, and it was not until I reached the

sunny lawn beyond the leafy shade, that I looked back. They were both in the distance, and beneath the flickering limes showed bright and dark as sunlight crossed the shadow. I watched them to the end of the avenue, and then raced on. It was well I did so, or I should have missed Davy and my sister, who, astonished at my prolonged absence, were just about to institute a search.

"Oh, Millicent!" I cried, as I breathlessly attained a seat in front of both their faces; "I am so sorry, but I was obliged to go with the Chevalier." And then I related how I had found him in my room.

They were much edified, and then I got into one of my agonies to know what they both thought about him. Davy, with his bright smile at noon-day, said in reply to my impassioned queries—"He certainly is, Charles, the very handsomest person I have ever seen."

"Mr. Davy! Handsome! I am quite sure you are laughing, or you would never call him handsome."

"Well, I have just given offence to my wife in the same way. It is very well for me that Millicent does not especially care for what is handsome."

"But she likes beauty, Mr. Davy; she likes whatever I like, and I know just exactly how she feels when she looks at your eyes. What very beautiful eyes yours are, Mr. Davy! don't you think so, Millicent?"

Davy laughed so very loud that the echoes called back to him again, and Millicent said—

"He knows what I think, Charles."

"But you never told me so much, did you, my love?"

"I like to hear you say 'my love' to Millicent, Mr. Davy."

"And I like to say it, Charles."

"And she likes to hear it. Now, Mr. Davy, about handsome. You should not call him so, why do you? You did not at the festival."

"Well, Charles, when I saw this wonderful being at the festival, there was a melancholy in his expression which was, though touching, almost painful; and I do not see it any longer, but, on the contrary, an exquisite sprightliness instead. He was also thinner then, and paler—no one can wish to see him so pale—but his colour now looks like the brightest health. He certainly *is* handsome, Charles."

"Oh! Mr. Davy, I am sorry you think so. But he does look well; I know what you mean, and I should think that he must

be very happy. But, besides that, Mr. Davy, you cannot tell how often his face changes. I have seen it change, and change, till I wondered what was coming next. I suppose, Mr. Davy, it is his forehead you call handsome? ”

“ It is the brow of genius, and as such requires no crown. Otherwise, I should say, his air is quite royal. Does he teach here, Charles? Surely not? ”

“ No, Mr. Davy, but he appoints our professors. I suppose you know he chose my master Anastase, though he is so young, to be at the head of all the violins? ”

“ No, Charles, it is not easy to find out what is done here, without the walls.”

“ No, Mr. Davy, nor within them either. I don’t know much about the Chevalier’s private life, but I know he is very rich, and has no Christian name. He has done an immense deal for Cecilia. No one knows exactly how much, for he won’t let it be told, but it is because he is so rich, I suppose, that he does not give lessons. But he is to superintend our grand examination next year.”

“ You told us so in your last letter, Charles,” observed Millicent; and then I was entreated to relate the whole story of my first introduction to Cecilia, and of the Volkslied, to which I had only alluded—for indeed it was not a thing to write about, though of it I have sadly written!

I was in the heart of my narration, in the middle of the benches, and, no doubt, making a great noise, when Davy, who was in front where he could see the door, motioned me to silence; I very well knew why, and obeyed him with the best possible grace.

As soon as I decently could, I turned and ran to meet the Chevalier, who was advancing almost timidly, holding little Starwood in his hand. The instant Starwood saw me coming, he left his hold, and flew into my arms; in spite of my whispered remonstrances, he *would* cling to my neck so fast that I had to present the Chevalier while his arms were entwined about me. But no circumstance could interfere with even the slightest effect *he* was destined to produce. Standing before Davy, with his little hands folded, and his whole face grave, though his eyes sparkled, he said, “ Will you come to my birthday feast, kind friends? For we cannot be strangers with this Carl between us. My birthday is next week, and as I am growing a man, I wish to make the most of it.”

"How old, Sir, shall you be on your birthday?" I asked, I fear rather impertinently, but because I could not help it.

"Ten, Carlomein."

"Oh, Sir!" we all laughed, Millicent most of all. He looked at her.

"You are a bride, Madam, and can readily understand my feelings, when I say it is rather discomposing to step into a new state. Having been a child so long, I feel it so on becoming a man, but in your case the trial is even more obvious."

Millicent now blushed with all her might, as well as laughed, Davy (to relieve her embarrassment) taking up the parable.

"And when, Sir, and where, will it be our happiness to attend you?"

"At the Glückhaus, not four miles off. It is a queer place which I bought, because it suited me better than many a new one, for it is very old, but I have dressed it in new clothes. I shall hope to make Charles at home some time or other before we welcome you, that he may make you, too, feel at home."

"It would be difficult, Sir, to feel otherwise in your society," said Davy, with all his countenance on flame.

"I hope we shall find it so together, and that this is only the beginning of our friendship."

He held out his hand to Millicent, and then to Davy, with the most perfect adaptation to an English custom, considered uncouth in Germany; Millicent looking as excited as if she were doing her part of the nuptial ceremony over again. Meantime, for I knew we must part, I whispered to Starwood—"So you are happy enough, Star, I should suppose?"

"Oh, Charles! too happy. My master was very angry at first, that the Chevalier carried me away."

"He carried you away then? I thought as much. And so Aronach was angry?"

"Only for a little bit, but it didn't matter; for the Chevalier took me away in his carriage, and said to master, 'I'll send you a rainbow when the storm is over.' And oh! Charles; I practise four hours at a time now, and it never tires me in the least. I shall never play like *him*, but I mean to be his shadow."

I loved my little friend for this.

"Oh! Charles; I am so glad you are coming to his birthday. Oh, Charles! I wish I could tell you everything all in a minute, but I can't."

"Never mind about that, for if you are happy it is all clear to

me. Only one thing, Star. Tell me what I have got to do on this birthday."

"Charles, it's the silver wedding, don't you know?"

"What, is he going to be married?"

"Who, Carlomein? Starwood won't tell!" said the Chevalier, turning sharply upon me, and bending his eyes, till he seemed to peep through the lashes. "He knows all about it, but he won't tell. Wilt thou, my shadow? By-the-by, there is a better word in English, 'chum,' but we must not talk slang, at least, not till we grow up. As for thee, Carlomein, Anastase will enlighten thee, and thou shalt not be blinded in that operation, I promise thee. 'Tis nothing very tremendous."

"Charles, I think we detain the Chevalier," observed Davy, ever anxious, and this time I thought so too.

"That would be impossible, after my detaining *you*; but I think I must find my mother, she will certainly think I have taken a walk to the moon. Come, Sterne! or wilt thou leave me in the lurch for that Carl of thine?"

"Oh, I beg pardon, Sir, please let me come too." And I dearly longed to "come too," when I saw them leave the hall, hand-in-hand.

"Now, Charles, we will carry you off, and give you some dinner."

"I don't want any dinner, Mr. Davy, I must go to Anastase."

"I knew he was going to say so!" said Millicent; "but, Charles, duty calls first, and if you don't dine we shall have you ill."

"I don't know whether I may go to the inn."

"Oh, yes! Lenhart obtained leave of absence at meals for you as long as we are here."

"Oh! by-the-by, Millicent, you said you had only come for one week."

"But, Charles, we may never have such another opportunity."

"Yes," added Davy, "I would willingly *starve* a month or two for the sake of this feast."

"Bravo, Mr. Davy. But then, Millicent?"

"Oh, Millicent! she shall starve along with me." We all laughed, and, as we walked out of the court-yard into the bright country, he continued—

"You know, Charles, I suppose, what is to be done, musically, at this birthday?"

"No, Mr. Davy, not in the least, and it is because I did not that I refused my dinner. After dinner, though, I shall go and call on Maria Cerinthia, and make her tell me."

"A beautiful name, Charles; is she a favourite of yours?"

"She is the most wonderful person I ever saw or dreamt of, Millicent; she does treat me very kindly, but she is above all of us except the Chevalier."

"Is she such a celebrated singer, then?"

"She is only fifteen, but then she seems older than you are, she is so lofty, and yet so full of lightness."

"A very good description of the Chevalier himself, Charles."

"Yes, Mr. Davy, and the Chevalier, too, treats her in a very high manner. I mean as if he held her to be very high."

"Is she at the school too?"

"She only attends for her lessons; she lives in the town with her brother, who teaches her himself, and her little sister. They are orphans, and so fond of one another."

I was just about to say, "She is to marry Anastase," but as I had not received general permission to open out upon the subject, I forbore. We dined at our little inn, and then, after depositing Davy by the side of Millicent, who was reposing, for he tended her like some choice cutting from the Garden of Eden, I set out on my special errand. On mounting the stairs to Maria's room, I took the precaution to listen; there were no voices to be heard just then, and I knocked, was admitted, and entered. In the bright chamber I found my dread young master, certainly in the very best company; for Josephine was half lost in leaning out of the window, and side by side sat Anastase and Maria. I did not expect to see him in the least, and felt inclined to effect a retreat, when she, without turning her eyes, which were shining full upon his face, stretched out both her lovely hands to me; and Anastase even said, "Do not go, Auchester, for we had, perhaps, better consult together."

"Yes, oh, yes, there is room here, Carlino; sit by me."

But, having spoken thus, she opened not her lips again, and seemed to wait upon his silence. I took the seat beside her, she was between us; and I felt as one feels when one stands in a flower garden in the dusk of night, for her spiritual presence as fragrance spelled me, and the mystery of her passion made its outward form as darkness. Her white dress was still folded round me, and her hair was still unruffled; but she was leaning back, and I perceived, for the first time, that his arm was round her; the slender fingers of his listless hand rested

upon the shoulder near me, and they seemed far too much at ease to trifle even with the glorious hair, silk-drooping its braids within his reach. *He* leaned forwards, and looked from one to the other of us, his blue eyes all tearless and unperturbed; but there was a stirring blush upon his cheeks, especially the one at her side; and so deep it burned, that I could but fancy her lips had lately left their seal upon it, a rose-leaf kiss. Such a whirl of excitement this fancy raised around me (I hope I was not preternatural either), that I could scarcely attend to what was going on.

"The Chevalier Seraphael," said Anastase, in his stilly voice, "has been writing a two-act piece to perform at his birthnight feast, which is in honour, not so much of his own nativity, as of his parents, arriving just that day at the twenty-fifth anniversary of their nuptials. He was born in the fifth year of their marriage, and upon their marriage-day. We have not too much time to work (but a week), as I made bold to tell him, but it appears this little work suggested itself to him suddenly, in his sleep, as he says. It is a fairy libretto, and I should imagine of first-rate attraction. This is the score, and, as it is only in manuscript, I need not say all our care is required to preserve it just as it now is. Your part, Auchester, will be sufficiently obvious, when you look it over with the Fräulein Cerinthia, as she is good enough to permit you to do so; but you had better not look at it at all until that time."

"But, Sir, she can't undertake to perfect me in the fiddle part, can she?"

"She could, I have no doubt, were it necessary," said Anastase, not satirically, but seriously; "but it just happens you are not to play."

"Not to play; then what on earth am I to do? Sing?"

"Just so—sing."

"Oh, how exquisite! but I have not sung for ever so long. In a chorus, I suppose, Sir?"

"By no means. You see, Auchester, *I* don't know your vocal powers, and may not do you justice; but the Chevalier is pleased to prefer them to all others for this special part."

"But I never sang to him."

"He has a prepossession, I suppose. At all events, it will be rather a ticklish position for you, as you are to exhibit yourself and your voice, in counterpart to the person who takes the precedence of all others, in songful and personal gifts."

"Sir,"—I was astonished, for his still voice thrilled with the

slightest tremble, and I knew he meant Maria,—“ I am not fit to sing with her, or to stand by her, I know; but I think, perhaps, I could manage better than most other people, for most persons would be thinking of their own voices, and how to set them off against *hers*; now I shall only think how to keep my voice down, so that hers may sound above it, and everybody may listen to it, rather than to mine.”

Maria looked continually in her lap, but her lips moved. “ Will you not love him, Florimond? ” she whispered, and something more, but I only heard this.

“ I could well, Maria, if I had any love left to bestow, but you know how it is. I am not surprised at Charles’s worship.”

It was the first time he had called me Charles, and I liked it very well—him, better than ever.

“ I suppose, Sir, I *may* have a look at the score, though? ”

“ No, you may not,” said Maria, “ for I don’t mean we should use this copy. I shall write it all out first.”

“ But that will be useless,” answered Anastase; “ he made that copy for us.”

“ I beg your pardon, I took care to ask him, and he has only written out the parts for the instruments. He thinks nothing of throwing about his writing, but it shall be preserved for all that.”

“ And how do you mean to achieve this copy? ” demanded Anastase. “ When will it be written? ”

“ It will be ready to-morrow morning.”

“ Fräulein Cerinthia! ” I cried, aghast, “ you are not going to sit up all night? ”

“ No, she is not,” returned Anastase, coolly, and he left the sofa, and walked to the table in the window, where it lay—a green bound oblong volume, of no slight thickness. “ I take this home with me, Maria, and you will not see it until to-morrow at recreation time, when I will arrange for Auchester to join you, and you shall do what you can together.”

“ Thanks, Sir! but surely you won’t sit up all night.”

“ No, I shall not, nor will a copy be made. In the first place, it will not be proper to make a copy; leave has not been given, and it cannot be thought of without leave; did you not know that, Maria? No, I shall not sit up; I am too well off, and far too selfish, too considerate perhaps, besides, to wish to be ill.”

Maria bore this as if she were thinking of something else—namely, Florimond’s forehead, on which she had fixed her eyes; and truly, as he stood in the full light which so few contours

pass into without detriment, it looked like lambent pearl beneath the golden shadow of his calm brown hair.

My hand was on the back of the sofa; she caught it suddenly in her own, and pressed it, as if stirred to commotion by agony of bliss, and at the same moment, yet looking on him, she said, "I wonder whether the Chevalier had so many fine reasons, when he chose somebody to administer the leadership, or, whether he did it, simply, because there was no better to be had?"

He smiled, still looking at the book which he had safely imprisoned between his two arms. "Most likely, in all simplicity. But a leader, even of an orchestra, under *his* direction, is not a fairy queen."

"Is Herr Anastase to lead the violins, then? How glorious!" I said to Maria.

"I knew you would say so. What then can go wrong?"

"And now I know what the Chevalier meant, when he said, 'I must go find my queen.' You are to be Titania."

"They say so. You shall hear all to-morrow: I have not thought about it, for when Florimond brought me home, I was thinking of something else."

"He brought you home, then?"

"And told me on the way. But he had to tell me all over again, when we came upstairs."

"But about the rehearsals?"

"We shall rehearse here, in this very room, and also with the orchestra, at a room in the village where the Chevalier will meet us: for he has his parents staying with him, and they are to know nothing that is to happen."

"I wish I could begin to study it to-night. I am so dreadfully out of voice since I had my violin; I have never sung at all, indeed, except on Sundays, and then one does not hear one's self sing at all."

"It is of no consequence, for the Chevalier told us your master, Aronach, told him that your voice was like your violin, but that it would not do to tell you so, because you might lose it, and your violin, once gained, you could never lose."

"That is true; but how very kind of him to say so! He need not have been afraid, though, for all I am so fond of singing. Perhaps he was afraid of making me vain."

Anastase caught me up quickly: "Carl! do not speak nonsense. No musicians are vain; no true artists, ever so

young; they could no more be vain than the angels of the Most High!"

"Well said, Florimond!" cried Maria, in a moment: "but it strikes me that many a false artist, fallen angel-like, indulges in that propensity; so that it is best to guard against the possibility of being suspected, by announcing, with free tongues, the pride we have in our art."

"That is better to be announced by free fingers, or a voice like thine, than by tongues, however free, for even the false prophet can prate of truth."

I perceived now the turn they were taking, so I said, "And do miracles in the name of music, too, Sir, can't they? like Marc Iskar, who, I know, is not a true artist for all that."

Anastase raised his brows. "True artists avoid personalities. That is the reason why we should use our hands instead of our tongues. Play a false artist down by the interpretation of true music; but never cavil, out of music, about what is false and true."

"Florimond, that is worthy to be your creed! You have mastery, we are only children."

"And children always chatter, I remember that; but it is, perhaps, scarcely fair to blame those who own the power of expression for using it, when we feel our own tongue cleave to the roof of our mouth."

So generous, too! I thought; and the thought fastened on me. I felt more than ever satisfied that all should remain as it was between them.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE day had come. The evening—an early evening, for entertainments are early in Germany, or were so in my German days. The band had preceded us, and we four drove alone; Maria shrouded in her mantilla, which she had never abandoned; little Josephine, Anastase, and myself. Lumberingly enough under any other circumstances; on this occasion as if in an aerial car. Dark glitter fell from pine-groves, the sun called out the green fields, the wild flowers looked enchanted; but for quite two hours we met no one, and saw nothing that reminded us of our destination. At length, issuing from a valley haunted by the oldest trees, and opening upon the freest

upland, we beheld an ancient house all gabled, pine-darkened also from behind, but with torrents of flowers in front sweeping its windows, and trailing heavily upon the stone of the illustrated gateway. A new-made lawn, itself more moss than grass, was also islanded with flowers in a thick mosaic; almost English in taste and keeping, was this garden-land. I had expected something of the kind from the allusion of the Chevalier, but it was evident much had been done, more than any could have done but himself, to mask in such loveliness that grey seclusion. The gateway was already studded with bright-hued lamps unlighted, hung amongst the swinging garlands, and as we entered we were smitten through and through with the festal fragrance. In the entrance hall I grew bewildered, and only desired to keep as near to Anastase and Maria as possible. Here we were left a few minutes, as it were, alone, and while I was expecting a special retainer to lead us again thence, as in England, the curtain of a somewhat obscure gateway, at the end of the space, was thrust aside, and a little hand beckoned us instantaneously forwards. Forwards we all flew, and I was the first to sunder the folded damask, and stand clear of the mystery. As I passed beneath it, and felt who stood so near me, I was subdued, and not the less when I discovered where I stood. It was in a little theatre, real and sound, but of design rare as if raised within an Oriental dream. We entered at the side of the stage; before us, tier above tier, stretched tiny boxes with a single chair in each, and over each, festooned, a curtain of softest rose-colour met another of softest blue. The central chandelier, as yet unlighted, hung like a gigantic dewdrop from a grove of oak-branches, and the workmen were yet nailing long green wreaths from front to front of the nest-like boxes. Seraphael had been directing, and he led us onwards to the centre of the house.

"How exquisite!"—"how dream-like!"—"how fairy!" broke from one and another; but I was quite in a maze at present, and in mortal fear of forgetting my part. The Chevalier, in complete undress, was pale and restless; still to us all he seemed to cling, passing amidst us confidently, as a fearful and shy-smitten child. I thought I understood this mood, but was not prepared for its sudden alteration. For he called to some one behind the curtain, and the curtain rose—rose upon the empty theatre with the scenery complete for the first act. And then the soul of all that scenery, the light of the fairy life, flashed back into his eyes, elfin-like in his

jubilance he clapped those little hands. Our satisfaction charmed him, but I must not anticipate. Letting the curtain again fall, he preceded us to the back of the scenery; and I will not, because I cannot in conscience, reveal what took place in that seclusion for artists great and small—sacred itself to art, and upon which no one dwells who is pressing onward to the demonstration, ever so reduced and concentrated, of art in its highest form.

At seven o'clock the curtain finally rose. It rose upon that tiny theatre crowded now with clustering faces; upon the chandelier all glittering, like a sphere of water with a soul of fire: the lingering day-beams shut out and shaded by a leaf-like screen. Out of all precedent the curtain rose, not even on the overture; for as yet not a note had sounded since the orchestra was tuned, before the theatre filled. It rose upon a hedge of mingled green and silver, densely tangled leafage, and a burst of moon-colourless flowers, veiling every player from view, and hiding every instrument of the silent throng, who, with arm and bow uplifted, awaited the magic summons. But by all the names of magic, how arose that flower-tower in the midst? For raised above the screen of sylvan symbol was a turret of roots, entwisted as one sees in old oaks that interlace their gnarled arms, facing the audience, and also in sight of the orchestra: and this wild nest was clad with silver lilies, twice the size of life, whose drooping buds made a coronal of the margin where the turret edged into the air. And in the turret, azure-robed, glitter-winged;—those wings sweeping the folded lilies as with the lustrous shadow of their light—stood our Ariel, the Ariel of our imaginations, the Ariel of that haunted music, yet unspelled from the silent strings and pipes!

We, behind, among the rocks—those gently painted rocks that faded into a heavenly distance—could only glimpse that delicate form, hovering amidst up-climbing lilies; those silver-shadowy plumes: that glorious face was shining into the light of the theatre itself—and we waited for his voice to reassure us. We need not have feared, even Maria and I; I was quivering and shuddering, but yet she did not sigh, her confidence was too unshaken; albeit in such a trying position, so minutely critical to maintain, did author perhaps never appear. In an instant, as the first soft blaze had broken on the world in front, did our Ariel raise his wand—no longer *like* the stem of a lily, but a lily-stem itself, all set with silver leaves, and whose crowning blossom sparkled with silver frostwork. He raised

it, but not yet again let it sweep, descending downwards; on the contrary, he clasped it in his roseate liliated fingers, and all amidst the great white buds, that made him shrink to elfin clearness; he began in a voice that might have been the soul of that charmed orchestra, to recite the little prologue, which may thus be rendered into English.

Awhile ago, a long bright while, I dwelt
In that old island with my Prospero.
He gave, not lent me Freedom—which I fed
Sometimes on spicy airs that heavenward roll,
From flowers that wing their spirits to the stars,
And scented shade that droppeth fruit or balm,
But soon a change smote through me, and I fell
Weary of stillness in the wide blue day,
Weary of breathless beauty, where the rose
Of sunset flushes with no fragrant sigh:
For that my soul was native with the spheres
Where music makes an everlasting morn.
All music in that ancient isle was mine,
That pulsed the air, or floated on the calm;
Old music veiled in the bemoaning breeze,
Or whispering kisses to the yearning sea,
Where foam upblown spray'd with its liquid stars
My plumes for all their dim cerulean grain.
From age to age the lonely tones I stored
In crystal deeps of unheard memory—
Froze them with virgin cold fast to the cups
Of wavering lilies—bade the roses bind
The orb'd harmonies in burning rest—
Thrilled with that dread elixir, dreaming song,
The veins of violets—made the green gloom
Of myrtle leaves hush the sounds intricate—
Charged the deep cedars with all mourning chords.
And having wide and far diffused my wealth—
Safe garnered, spelled—unknown of reasoning men—
I long to summon it, to disenchant
My most melodious treasure breathless hid
In bell and blade, in blossom-blush and buds,
And mystic verdure, the soft shade of rest.
Methinks in this wild wood, this home of flowers,
My harmonies are clustered, yea, I feel
The voiceless silence stir with voiceful awe,
I feel the fanning of a thousand airs
That will not be repressed, that crave to wake
In resurrection of tone infinite
From the tranc'd beauty, her divinest death.
Arise my spirits! wake my slumbering spells!
Dawn on the dreamland of these alien dells!

As the last words died away, pronounced alike with the rest in accents so peculiar, yet so pure; so soft, yet so unshaken; he swept the stem of lilies around his brow. The frosted flower flashed shudderingly against the lamplight, and with its motion without a pause opened the overture, as by those words themselves invoked and magically won from the abyss of

sylvan silence. Three long, longing sighs from the unseen wind instruments, in withering notes, prepared the brain for the rush of fairy melody that was as the subtlest essences of thought and fragrance enfranchised. The elfin progression, prestissimo, of the subject, was scarcely realised as the full suggestion dawned of the leafy shivering it portrayed. The violins, their splendours concentrated like the rainbows of the dewdrops, seemed but the veiling voices for that ideal strain to filter through; and yet, when the horns spoke out, a blaze of golden notes, one felt the deeper glory of the strings to be more than ever quenchless as they returned to that ever pulsing-flow. Accumulating in orchestral richness, as if flower after flower of music were unsheathing to the sun; no words, no expression self-agonised to caricature, can describe that fairy overture. I am only reverting to the feeling, the passion, it suggested; not to its existent art and actual interpretation.

Its dissolution not immediate, but at its fullest stream subsiding, ebbing; seemed, instead of breaking up and scattering the ideal impression received, to retain it and expand it in itself through another transition of ecstasy into a musical state beyond. During the ethereal modulations, by a sudden illumination of the stage, the scenery behind uncurtained all along, started into light. Still beneath the leafy cloud by mystic management, the hidden band reposed; but before the audience a sylvan dream had spread. The time was sunset, and upon those hills I spoke of it seemed to blush and burn, still leaving the foreground distinct in a sort of pearly shadow. That foreground was masked in verdure, itself precipitous with descending sides clothed thick with shrubs, that lifted their red bells clear to the crimson beams behind, and shelving into a bed of enormous leaves of black-green growth, such as one sometimes comes upon in the very core of the forest. Beneath those leaves we nestled, Maria and I; I can only speak of what I felt and others saw; not of that which any of us heard. For simultaneously with the blissful modulation into the key-note of the primeval strain, we began our parts side by side unseen. It was a duet for Titania and Oberon, the alto being mine, the mezzo-soprano hers; and it was to be treated with the most distant softness. The excitement had everpassed its crisis with me, and no calm could have been more trance-like than that of both our voices, so far fulfilling his aspiration; which conceived for that effect all the passionless serenity of a nature devoid of pain—the prerogative of a fairy life alone.

Ariel! we hear thee;
Slumbering, dreaming, near thee.
Bursting from control
As from death the soul—
From the bud the flower—
From the will the power—
Risen, by the spell
Thou alone canst quell,
Hear we, Ariel,
Ariel! we feel thee.
Music, to reveal thee,
Drowns, as dawn the night,
Us in thy delight.
We, immortal, own
Thee supreme alone.
Strongest, in the spell
Thou canst raise or quell,
Feel we, Ariel!

And Maria shook the leaves above her spreading, and waving aside the broad green fans, stood out to the audience as a freshly blossomed idea from the shadows of a poet's dream. For here had music and poetry met together; here even as righteousness and peace had embraced, heaven-sent and spiritual; nor was there aught of earth in that fancy-hour. I was nearest her, and supported her with my arm; her floating scarf, transparent, spangled, fell upon my own rose-hued mantle, which blushed through its lucid mist. Her hair trembling with water-like gems clothed her to the very knees; her cheek was white as her streaming robe, but her eye was as a midnight moon, bright yet lambent; and while she sang she looked at Anastase, as he stood a little above the others in the band, and appeared to have eyes for his violin alone. The next movement was a fairy march, *pianissimo*; a rustling gathering accompaniment that muffled a measure delicate as precise: it was as for the marshalling of troops of fairies, who, by the shifting of the scenery appeared clustering to the stems of the red foxgloves, that bent not beneath that fragile weight. And, as the march waned ravishingly, another verse arose for the duet we sang—

Ariel! behold us,
In thy strains enfold us;
Minding but that we
Ministrant may be.
On thy freak or sport
Waits our fairy court—
Mortals cannot tell
How to cross thy spell,
Nor we, Ariel!

And Ariel lifted the lily-wand, and silence awaited his reply.

Still, while he spoke in that recitative so singularly contrasting with the voice of any song, might be heard weird snatches from the veiled orchestra, as if music fainted from delight of him, strange sounds indeed, now sigh, now sob, that broke against his unfaltering accents, yet disturbed them not.

Friends! royal darlings of mine ancient age!
 Welcome, right welcome, in the realm of sound
 To majesty and honour! Sooth to say
 Long time I languished for your presences,
 That nothing save our Music seeks and finds;
 Though Poesy seeks to find, and has not met,
 As we, through might of Music, face to face.
 Your potence is my boon; I bid it work
 With mine own spells, in soul-like eager flame
 To flash about my spirit and make day;
 Till, as in times of old, we shine as one.
 Far in those undulating vales apart
 A castle lifts its glittering ghostly hue.
 In whose calm walls, that years spare tenderly,
 Dwelleth the rival soul of Faërie
 And Music—one whose very name is spell
 Immutable—for that fixed name is Love.
 And love holds yonder his best festal rite
 This evening, when the moontime draweth nigh.
 Twain souls love there, and meet; but not as cleft
 By late long parting—they have met and loved
 Years upon years, since youth; none ever loved
 So long as they unparted, unappalled,
 Save my Titania and her Oberon!
 For twenty-five their one-like summers count
 Since the dim rapture of the bridal dream.
 Such, among mortals jubilant, they call
 The silver Wedding—rare and purer crown
 Than the wreathed myrtle of the marriage morn.
 All that is rare and pure is of our own;
 Our elements mix gladly into joy:
 But chiefly Love is our own atmosphere,
 And chiefly those who love our pensioners
 Remain—for where unsullied Love remains
 Doth Faërie consecrate its festal strains.

The curtain fell on the first act as Ariel finished speaking. Again rising, the scene indeed had changed. The grey castle immediately fronted the audience, its buttresses glistening in the perfect moonlight; the full languid orb itself divided by the dark edge of a tower. The many windows shone ruby with the gleam inside, that seemed ready to pour through the stonework; and on the ground floor especially, the radiance was as if sun-lamps blazed within. And midst the blaze, scarcely softened by the outer silver shine, rose the exciting, exhilarating burden of an exquisite dance measure, brilliant, almost delirious; albeit distance-clouded, as it issued from another

band behind the stage. The long straight alleys of moon-bathed lindens to which the waltz-whirlwind floated, parted on either hand, and left a smooth expanse of lawn, now white, heaving like a moon-kissed sea, and as soon as the measure had passed into its glad refrain, two little Loves struck from the lime avenues to the lawn, directly before the ball-room. I call them Loves, but they were anything but Cupids, for they were mystical little creatures enough, and, in the prevailing moonlight, showed like bright birds of blushing plumage, as they each carried a roseate torch of tinted flame that made their small bodies look much like flame themselves. They were no others than Josephine and my own Starwood, but it would have been impossible to recognise them unprepared. As they stood they paused an instant, and then flung the torches high into the air against the side of the castle; and as the rose-flame kissed the moonbeams upon the walls, it was extinguished, but the whole building burst into an illumination, entirely of silver lamps; calm, not coruscant: translucent, streaming; itself like concentrated moonshine, or the light of the very lilies. And with the light that drank up into itself the rose-radiance, our Ariel with the silvered hedge, the lilies, the shine, the shimmer, swelled upon the vision in softest swiftness; and Ariel, leaning upon his nest, seemed listening to the dance symphonies afar.

Soon a great shout arose; no elfin call, but a cry of wonder-stricken earthlings. And then the hall front opened, a massy portal that rolled back, and out of the ball-room, amidst the diminishing dance-song, poured the dancers upon the lawn in ranks, their fluttering airy dresses passing into the silver-light like clouds. And as they streamed forth, there broke a delicate peal of laughter in response to the wondering shout, accompanied by the top-notes of the violins, vividly piano; then Ariel arose, and himself addressed the multitude. Sharp sweet notes in unison, intermitted this time with his words, but ceased when he turned to his fairy troop, and incited them to do homage to the name of love. Nor do I even essay to describe our feats subsequently, which might in their relation tend to deteriorate from the conviction that the illustrated music was all in all, not their companion, but their element and creator.

Except that in the last scene, after exhibiting every kind of charm that can co-exist with scenic transition, the portraits of the father and mother, in whose honour the fairydom had

united, appeared framed in an archway of lilies with their leaves of silver, painted with such skill that the imagery almost issued from the canvas: and while Titania and Oberon supported the lustrous framework on either hand, themselves all shivering with the silver radiance, on either hand to form a vista from which the gazers caught the picture, rose trees of giant harebells, all silver—white as if veined with moonshine, and the attendant fairies springing winged from their roots, shook them until the tremulous silver shudder was, as it were, itself a sound; for, as they quivered, or seemed to quiver, did the final chorus in praise of wedded love rise chime upon chime from the fairy voices and the rapt Elysian orchestra.

“All that’s bright must fade.” This passionate proverb is trite and travestied enough, but neither in its interpretation of necessity irrelevant or grotesque. I do not envy those who would strangle melancholy as it is born into the soul, and again to quote, though from a source far higher and less investigated, “There are woes, ill bartered for the garishness of joy.” Such troubles we may not christen in the name of sorrow; for sorrow concerns our personality, and in these we agonise for others, not a thought of self intrudes; we only feel and know that we can do nothing, and are silent.

At this distance of time, with the mists of boyish inexperience upon my memory of myself, I can only advert to the issues of that evening as they appeared. As they are, they can only be read where all things tell, where nothing that has happened shall be in vain; where mystery is eternal light. How strangely I recall the smothered sound, the long-repressed shout of rapture, that soared and pierced through the fallen and folded curtain!—the eminent oblivion of everything but him for whom it was uttered, or rather, kept back. For the music bewitched them still, and they could no more realise their position in front, even among the garlanded tiers, than we behind, stumbling into regions of lampless chaos.

I felt I must faint if I could not retreat, and as instinctively, I had sought for Maria’s hand; I found it and it saved me, for though I could not hear her speak I knew she was leading me away. I had closed my eyes, and when I opened them we were together again in the little dressing-room, that had been devoted to us alone, and in which we had robed and waited.

“Oh, Carlino!” said Maria, “I hope no one is coming, for I feel I must cry.”

“Do not, pray!” I cried; for her paleness frightened me;

“but let me help you to undress. I can do that, though I could not dress you, as the Chevalier seemed to think.”

For the Chevalier had slyly entered beforehand, and had himself invested her with the glittering costume. I was still in a dream of those elfin hands as they had sleeked the plumes and soothed the spangled undulations of the scarf, and I could not bear her to be denuded of them, they had become so natural now. I had stripped off my own roseate mantle, and all the rest, in a moment; and had my own coat on before she had moved from the chair into which she had flung herself or I had considered what was to be done next. I was running my fingers through my hair, somewhat distraught in fancy, when some one knocked at the door. I went to it, and beheld, as I expected, our Ariel—*unarielised* yet, except that he had doffed his wings.

“Is she tired?” he whispered, softly; “is she very tired?” and without even looking at me he passed in, and stood before her.

“Thank you for all your goodness!” said he, in the tenderest of all his voices, no longer cold, but as if fanned by the same fire that had scorched his delicate cheek to a hectic, like the rose fresh open to the sun.

“And you, Sir; oh, you!” Maria exclaimed with enthusiasm, lifting her eyes from all that cloud of hair, as twin sunbeams from the dark of night. “Oh, your music! your music! it is of all that is the most divine, and nothing ever has been or shall be to excel it. It breaks the heart with beauty; it is for the soul that seeks and comprehends it, all in all. And will you not, as you even promised, reform the drama?”

“If it yet remains to me, after all is known. That I cannot yet discern—infant germ of all my art’s dread children!—inspiration demands thee only!” He checked himself, but as naturally as if no deep insufferable sentiment had imbued his words; his caressing calm returned. “I did not come for a compliment; I came to help you. Also to bring you some pretty ice, made in a mould like a little bird in a little nest; but I will not give it you now, because you are too warm.” He was smiling now, as he glanced downwards at the crystal plate he held.

“I am not warm,” she answered, very indifferently, still with grateful intention; “and I should like some ice better than anything, if you are so kind as to give it me.”

“Let me feed you, then,” was his sweet reply; and she made

no resistance. And he fed her, spoonful by spoonful—presenting her with morsels so fairy, that I felt he prolonged the opportunity vaguely, and almost wondered why. Before it was over another knock came, very impatient for so cool a hand, as it was that of Anastase himself. However, there was no exhilaration of manner on his part, one would not have thought he had just been playing the violin.

“They are all inquiring for you, Sir,” he said, very respectfully to Seraphael; “your name is calling through and through the theatre.”

“I dare say,” replied the Chevalier, lightly, daringly; but he made no show of moving, though Maria had finished the ice-bird and last straw of the nest. Then Anastase approached. “That weight of hair will tire you, let me fasten it up for you, Maria, and then we need detain no one, for Carl I see is ready.” A change came upon the Chevalier, as if ice had passed upon his cheek, he paled, he turned proud to the very topmost steep of his shadeless brow, he laughed coldly, but airily. “Oh, if that is it, and you want to get rid of us, Carl and I will go. Come, Carlomein, for we are both of us in the way; but I will say, it is the first time any one ever dared to interfere between the queen and her chosen consort.”

“It would be impossible,” said Anastase, with still politeness, “that you should be in the way; that is our case, indeed; but Maria, as *Maria*, would certainly not detain you.”

“Maria, as Maria, would have said, you are too good, Sir, to notice the least of your servants, too good to have come and stayed; but,” she added, looking at Anastase with her most enchanting sweetness, a smile like love itself; “*he* will always have it, that I am content he should do everything for me.” I was astonished, for nothing, except the seasonable excitement, could have drawn forth such demonstration from her before the Chevalier. He was not looking at her; he looked at me vividly. I could not bear his eyes, simultaneously with Maria’s words, he had so allured my own, though I longed to gaze away.

“Come!” he continued, holding his hand to me, “come, Carlomein.” I took his hand. He grasped me as if those elfin fingers were charged with lightning. I shook and trembled, even outwardly; but he drew me on with that convulsive pressure never heeding, and holding his head so high, that the curls fell backwards from the forehead. We passed to the stage. He led me behind the stage—deserted, dim—to another door behind that, opened by waving drapery, to the

garden-land. He led me in the air, round the outside of the temporary theatre, to the main front of the house, to the entrance through the hall, swiftly, silently—up the stairs into the corridor, and so to a chamber I had never known, nor entered. I saw nothing that was in the room, and generally I see everything. I believe there were books; I feel there was an organ, and I heard it a long time afterwards. But I was only conscious this night that then I was with him—shut up and closed together with his awful presence, in the travail of presentiment.

He had placed me on a seat, and he sat by me, still holding my hand; but his own was now relaxed and soft, the fingers cold, as if benumbed.

"Carlomein," he said, "I have always loved you, as you know; but I little thought it would be for this."

"How, Sir? Why? I am frightened; for you look so strange, and speak so strangely, and I feel as if I were going to die."

"I wish we both were! But do not be frightened. Ah! that is only excitement, my darling. You will let me call you so to-night?"

"Let you, dear, dearest Sir! You have always been my darling. But I am too weak and young to be of any use to you; and that is why I wish to die."

"My child, if thou wert strong and manly, how could I confide in thee? Yet God forgive me if I show this little one too much, too early!"

His eyes wore here an expression so divine, so little earthly, that I turned away, still folding his hand, which I bathed in tears, that fell shiveringly from my dull heart, like rain from a sultry sky. It was the tone that pierced me; for I knew not what he meant, or only had a dream of perceiving *how much*.

"Sir, you could not tell me too much. You have taught me all I know already; and I don't intend ever to learn of anybody else."

"My child, it is God who taught thee. It is something thou hast to teach *me* now!"

"Sir, is it anything about myself?" I chose to say so, but did not think it.

"No; about some one those eyes of thine do love to watch and wait on, so that sometimes I am almost jealous of thine eyes! But it cannot be a hardened jealousy while they are so baby-kind."

"It is Maria, then, Sir, of course. But they are not babies, my eyes, I mean; for they know all about her, and so do I. I know why sometimes she seems looking through us, instead of at us. It is because she is seeing other eyes in her soul, and our eyes are only just eyes to her, and nothing else; you know what I mean, Sir?"

I said all this, because I had an instinctive dread of his self-betrayal beyond what was needed. Alas! I had not even curiosity left. But I was mistaken in him, so far. He leaned forwards, stroked my hair, and kissed it.

"Whose eyes, then, Carlomein?"

"My master, Anastase, is that person whose eyes I mean."

"Impossible! But I was wrong to ask thee. Assuredly, thou art an infant, and couldst even make me smile. That is a fancy only. Not Anastase, my child! Any one but Anastase."

What anguish curled beneath those coaxing tones!

"Sir, I know nothing about it, except that it is true. But that it is true I *do* know, for Maria told me so herself; and they will be married as soon as she is educated." I trembled as I spoke in sore dismay; for the truth was borne to me that moment in a flash of misery, and all I could feel was what I was fool enough to say, "Oh, that I were Maria!" He turned to me in an instant; made a sort of motion with both his arms, like wings, having released the hand I held. I looked up now, and saw that a more awful paleness—a virgin shadow appalling as that of death—had fixed his features. I threw myself into his arms; he was very still, mute, all gentleness. I kissed the glistening dress, the spangled sleeves. He moved not—murmured not. At last my tears would flow. They rushed, they scalded; I called out of the midst of them, and heard that my own voice, child as I was, fell hollow through my hot lips.

"Oh, let my heart burst! Do let me break my heart!" I sobbed, and a shiver seemed to spread from my frame to his. He brought me closer to his breast, and bowed his soft curls till they were wet with my wild weeping through and through. It heaved not. No passion swelled the pulses of that heart; still he shivered as if his breath were passing. In many, many minutes, I heard his voice. It was a voice all tremble, like a harp-string, jarred and breaking. "Carlomein, you will ever be dearer to me than I can say from this night; for you have seen sorrow no man should have seen, and no woman could have suffered. You know what I wished; yet perhaps not yet—how

should you? Carlomein, when you become a man, I hope you will love me as you do now, when you know what I do feel—what I do wish. May you never despise suffering, for my sake. May you never suffer as I do! You *only* could. I know no one else, poor child! God take you first, before you suffer *so*. You see the worst of it is, Carlomein, that we need not have suffered at all, if I had only known it from the beginning. But it is very strange, is it not?" He spoke as if inviting me to question him.

"What, dearest Sir?"

"That she should not love me. How could she help it?"

Of all his words, few as they were indeed, these touched me most. I felt indeed, how could she help it? But I was, child as I was, too wise to say so.

"You see, Sir, she could not help loving Anastase!"

"Nor could I help loving her, nor can I; but the sorrow is, Carlomein, that neither on earth nor in heaven will she wish to be mine."

"Sir, in heaven it won't matter whether she married Anastase or not; for if she were perfect here, she could but love you, and *there* she will be perfect, and will understand you, Sir."

"Sweet religion, if true. Sweet philosophy—false as pleasant."

"But, Sir, you will not be unhappy, because it is of no use; and, besides, she will find it out, and you would not like that. And you will not break your heart, Sir, because of music."

"I should never break my heart, Carlchen, under any earthly circumstances." He smiled upon me indifferently; a pure disdain chiselled every feature in that attitude. "There is now no more to be said. I need scarcely say, my child, never speak of this! But I *will* command you to forget it—as I forget—have already forgotten."

He rose, and passed his hand, with weary grace, over the curls that had fallen forwards, and then he took me by the hand, and we went out together, I knew not whither.

I returned that night with my brother and sister to Cecilia. I never had taken part in a scene so brilliant as the concluding banquet, which was in the open air, and under shade lamp-fruited; but I knew nothing that happened to me—was cold all over, and for a time, at least, laid aside my very consciousness. Millicent was positively alarmed by my paleness, which she attributed, neither wrongly, to excitement; and it was in consequence of her suspicion that we retired very early.

We met no one—having bowed to the king and queen of the night's festival—nor did I behold the Chevalier, except in the distance, as he glided from table to table, to watch that all should fare well at them, though he never sat himself. Maria was seated by Anastase. I noticed them, but did not gaze upon them. Their aspect sickened me. It was well that Millicent believed me ill; for I was thus not obliged to speak, and she and Davy had it all to themselves on the road.

That time, when she got me to bed, I became strangely affected in a fashion of my own; and, not sleeping at all, was compelled to remain there day after day, for a week, not having the most shadowy notion of that which was my affection. It was convenient that Davy knew a great deal about such suffering on his own account, or I might have been severely tampered with. He would not send for a doctor, as he understood what was the matter with me; and presently I got right. In fact, my nerves, ever in my way, were asserting themselves furiously; and as I needed no physic, I took none, but trusted Davy, and kept quiet.

I heard, upon my resuscitation, that Maria, Anastase, and Delemann, had all been to inquire after me; and, oh, strange sweetness! also the Chevalier. It was some satisfaction when Millicent said he was looking very well, and had talked to her for half-an-hour. This news tended most to my restoration of anything; and it was not ten days before I returned to school—my people having left the village the same morning only.

I saw as much of Anastase as before, now; but I felt as if till now I had never known him, nor of how infinite importance a finite creature may become, under certain circumstances. In a day or two, I had worked up to the mark sufficiently to permit myself a breath of leisure; and towards the afternoon I went after Maria, to accompany her home. This she permitted; but I knew that Anastase would be with her in the evening, and refused her invitation to enter, for I felt I could not bear to see them together just then. I entreated her, therefore, to take a walk with me instead. She hesitated, on account of her preparation for the morrow; but when I reminded her that Anastase desired her to walk abroad daily, she assented. "Florimond would be pleased."

Up the green sides of the hill we wandered, and again into the valley. It was a mild day, with no rude wind to break the silken thread of conversation, and I was mad to talk to her. I could hardly tell how to begin, though I knew what I wanted

to find out well enough; but I need not have been afraid. She was singularly unsuspicious.

"So, Carl," she began herself, "the Chevalier took you into his room—his very room, where he writes, was it?"

"I don't know," I said, "whether he writes there. I should think he would write anywhere. But it was stuffed full of books, and had an organ."

"A large organ?"

Heaven help and pardon me! I had not seen anything in the room, specifically; but I drew upon my imagination, usually a lively spring enough.

"Oh, yes; a very large organ, with beautiful carving about it; cherubs above, with their wings spread, I believe; and the books bound exquisitely, and set in cabinets."

"What sort of furniture?"

"I don't know. Oh, I think it was dark red, and very rich looking. Embroidered cloths, too, upon the tables and sofas; but, really, I may be mistaken, because, you see, I was not looking at them."

"No, I should think not. Carnation is his favourite colour, you know. He told me so."

"He tells you everything, I think, Maria."

"Yes, of course, he does—just as one talks to a little child, that asks for stories."

"That is not the reason. It cannot be; besides, he always talks about himself to you, and one never talks about one's self to children."

"Do not you? But, Carl, he chiefly talks to me about music."

"And for that, is he not himself music? But, Maria, I can, telling you his favourite colour, talking about himself, as much as if he told you he had a headache."

"Well, Carl, he did come to me when he had scratched his finger, and ask me to tie it up."

"And did you? Was that since *the* evening?"

"It was the day before yesterday. He was going to play somewhere. But, Carl, we shall not hear him play again."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, not until next year. He is going to travel."

"To travel—going away—where—who with?" I was stupid.

"He told us all so the other day—just before you returned, Carl. He went through all the class-rooms to bid farewell. I was in the second singing-room with Spoda and two or three

others. He spoke to Spoda, 'Have you any commands for Italy—any part of Italy? I am going unexpectedly, or we would have had a concert first, but now we must wait until May for our concert.' Spoda behaved very well, and exhibited no surprise—only showered forth his *confetti* speeches about parting. Then the Chevalier bowed to us who were there, and said, 'My heart will be half here; and I shall hope to find Cecilia upon the self same hill—not a stone wanting.' And then he sighed; but otherwise he looked exceedingly happy. And who, do you think, is going with him? "

"His father, I should imagine."

"No; old Aronach, and your little friend, who, Carl, I suspect, makes a sort of chevalier of you, from what I hear."

"Yes; he is very fond of me. But, Maria, what is he going away for? Is he going to be married? "

She smiled with her own peculiar expression—wayward, yet warm.

"Oh, dear no! nothing of the kind, I am sure. I cannot fancy the Chevalier in love even. It seems most absurd."

"I do not think that. He is too lovable not to be loved."

"And that is just why he never will love—to marry, I mean—until he has tried everything else, and pleased himself in every manner."

"Maria, how do you know? And do you think he will marry one day? "

"Carl, I believe there is not anything he will not do; and yet he will be happy—very happy—only not as he expects. I am certain the Chevalier thinks he should find as much in love as in music—for himself, I mean—now, I believe it would be nothing to him in comparison."

I could scarcely contain myself, I so sincerely felt that she was mistaken. But I seriously resolved to humour her, lest I should say too much, or she should say too little.

"Oh, of course. But I don't think he would *expect* to find more in love, because he knows how he is loved."

"Not *how*, Carl—only how much."

"But, Maria, I fancy he wants as much love as music, and that is plenty."

"But, Carl, he makes the music, and we love him in it, just as we love God in His works; and I cannot conceive of any love being acceptable to him when it infringed his right as supreme."

"You mean that he is proud."

"So proud that if love came to him without music, I don't think he would take any notice of it."

I felt as surely as she did, sure of that singular pride, but also that it was not a fallen pride, and that she could read it not.

"You mean, Maria, that if you and I were not musical, supposing such a thing to be possible, he would not like us nor treat us as he does now?"

"I know he would not."

"But then it would be impossible for us to be as we are if we were changed as to music, and we could not love as we do."

"I don't think that has anything to do with it, and, indeed, I am sure not. You see, Carl, you make me speak to you openly. I have never done so before, and I should not but that you force me to it—not that I dislike to speak of it, for I think of nothing else—but that it might be troublesome."

Could it be that she was about, in any sense, to open her heart? Mine felt as if it had collapsed, and would never expand again; but I was very rejoiced, for many reasons.

"Oh, Maria! if I could hear you talk all day about your own feelings, I should know really that you cared to be my friend, but I could not ask you to do so, nor wish, unless you did."

"Carl, if you were not younger than I am I should hesitate—and still more if, where I came from, we did not become grown up so fast, that our lives seem too quick, too bright! Oh! I have often thought so—and shall think so again—but I will not now because I intend to be very happy. You know, Carl, you cannot understand though you may *feel* what I feel when I think of Florimond. And it is possible you think him higher than I do. For you do him justice now."

"I suppose I do—I am very certain that I adore his playing."

"I do not care for his playing—or scarcely. And yet I am aware that it is the playing of a master, of a musician; and I am proud to say so—still I would rather be that violin than hear it, and endure the sweet anguish he pours into it than be as I am, so far more divided from him than it is."

"Maria!"

"But Florimond does not mind my feeling this, or I should not say it—on the contrary, he feels the same, and when first Heaven made him love me, he felt it even then."

"Was that long ago, Maria?"

"It is beginning to be a long time, for it was in the summer that I was twelve, before my father died. I was in France that

summer, and very miserable, working hard and seeming to do nothing, for my father, rest his soul! was very severe with me, and petted Josephine; for which I thank and praise him, and love her all the better. We were twenty miles from Paris, and lodged in a cottage whose roof was all ruins; but it was a dry year, and no harm came—besides we had been brought up like gipsies, and were sometimes taken for them. In the day I practised my voice and studied Italian or German; then prepared our dinner, which we ate under a tree in the garden, Josephine and I, though she was almost a baby then, and slept half her time. One noon she was asleep upon the grass, and I was playing with the flowers she had plucked, with no sabots on, for I was very warm—when I heard a step, and peeped behind that tree. I saw a boy, or as I thought him, a very wonderful man, putting aside the boughs to look upon me. You have told me, Carl, how you felt when you first saw the Chevalier; well, it was a little as I felt when I saw that face, only, instead of looking on as you did, I was obliged to look away and hide my eyes with my hand. He was, to my sight, more beautiful than anything I had ever seen or dreamed about; and therefore I could not look upon him, for I know I was not thinking about myself. Still, I felt sure he was coming to speak to me, and so he did; but not for a long time, for he stepped round the tree, and sat down upon the turf just near me, and played with the sabots and the wild thyme I had played with, and presently put out his hand to stroke Josephine's hair as it lay in my lap. I never thought of being angry, or of wondering at him even, for the longer I had him near me the better; though I was rather frightened lest my father should return; but at last he did speak, and when once he began there was not soon an end. We talked of all things. I can remember nothing, but I do know this; that we never spoke of music except that I told how I passed my time, and how my father taught me. He went away before Josephine awoke, and nobody knew he had come; but I returned the next day to the place where I had seen him, and again I found him there. In that country one could do such things, and it was the hour my father was absent—for he had other pupils at the houses of the inhabitants several miles about, and we lived frugally in order that he might give us all advantages when we should be old enough. I saw Florimond every day for a week; and then for a week he never came. That week I was taken ill, I could not help it; I was too young to hide it. And when he came again I told him

I should have died if he had stayed away. And then he said that he loved me, but that he was going a journey, and should not for a long time see me again; but that I was never, never to forget him; and he gave me a bit of his hair, softer than any curl. I gave him, too, my mother's ring, that I had always kept warm in my bosom; and I never even lamented that he was departed; because I knew I should be his for ever. We had a long long talk—of feelings, and fears, and mysteries—of the flowers of heaven and earth—of glory and bliss—of hope and ecstasy. We poured out our hearts together and did not even trouble ourselves to say we loved. I think he was there three hours, but I sent him away myself, just in time to be quite ready, and not at all in a tremble, for my father's supper. Papa came home by sunset, much later than usual; and I tried hard to wake up, but was as a wanderer in sleep; until he took from his pocket a parcel and gave it me to open. He was in great good humour to-night, for he had heard of my brother's success at the Academie; but it was not my brother who sent the parcel, which contained two tickets for a grand concert in Paris the next morning, and a little anonymous billet to beg that we would go—I and my father.

My father was much flattered, and still more because there was a handful of gold to pay the expenses of our journey. This settled the matter—we did go in the diligence that night. I took my best frock and gloves, and we slept at a grand hotel for once in our lives, and supped there, and breakfasted the next morning before setting out for the concert. When I walked into the streets with my father I envied the ladies their bonnets, for I had not even my mantilla, it was too shabby; and I wore alone a wreath of ivy that I had gathered from under that very tree at home, and I was thinking too seriously of one only person to wish to see or to be seen. We went into the very best places, but I thought as I sat down how I must have changed in a short time; for a little while before I would have almost sold myself to go to this same concert, and now I did not care. There was a grand vocal trio first, and then a fantasia for the harp, and then a tenor solo. But next in the programme came one of Fesca's solos for the violin, and when I saw the violinist come up into the front, I fell backwards, and should have swooned had he not begun to play. His tones sustained me—drew me upwards—it was Florimond—my Florimond—mine then as now."

"I thought it would turn out so," I exclaimed, rudely

enough; "but, Maria, when you said music had nothing to do with love, I think you were mistaken, or that you misunderstood yourself, for though I can't express it, I am sure that our being musical makes a great difference in the way we feel, and that, though we don't allude to it, it will go through everything, and make us what we are."

"Perhaps you are right, and, Carl, I should not like to contradict you. But I know I should have loved Florimond if he had not been a musician—if he had been a shoemaker, for instance."

"Yes, because he still might have been musical; and, if the music had remained within him, it might have influenced his feelings even more than it does now."

"Carl, but I don't love in that way all those who are musical, therefore, why must it be the music that makes me love *him*? What will you say to me now when I tell you I cannot imagine wishing to marry the Chevalier."

"Maria!"

"Carl, I could not—it would abase the power of worship in my soul—it would cloud my idea of heaven—it would crush all my life within me. I should be transported into a place where the water was all light, and I could not drink—the air was all fire to wither me. I should flee from myself in him, and, in fleeing, die."

Her strange words, so unlike her youth, consumed my doubts as she pronounced them. I shuddered inwardly, but strove to keep serene. "Maria, that may be because you had loved when you saw him, and it would have been impossible for you to be inconstant."

"Carlino, no. You and I are talking of droll things for a girl and a boy; but I would rather you knew me well, because, perhaps, it will help you when you grow up to understand some lady better than you would if I did not speak so openly. Under no circumstances could I have loved him, so as to wish to belong to him in that sense. For, Carl, though it might have been inconstant, it would not have been unfaithful to myself if I had seen and loved him better than Florimond; it might have been that I had not before found out what I ought to submit my soul to, nor could I have helped it; such things have happened to many, I dare say—to many natures, but not to mine; if I feel once, it is entirely, and for always, and I cannot think how it is that so few women, even of my own race, are so unfixed about their feelings, and have so many fancies. I

sometimes believe there is a reason for my being different, which, if it is true, will make him sadder than the saddest—you can guess what I mean? ”

“ Yes, Maria; but I know there is nothing in it; it is what my mother would call a morbid presentiment, and I wish she could talk to you about it. I should think there might be truth in it, but that it always proves false. My sister had it once, so had my dear brother, Mr. Davy. I don’t believe people have it when they are really going to die.”

“ It is not a morbid presentiment, for morbid means diseased, and I am sure I am not diseased; but my idea is, that people who form so fast cannot live long. I am only fifteen, and I feel as if I had lived longer than anybody I know.”

“ Then,” said I, laughing, for I felt it was wrong to permit her much range here; “ I shall die soon, Maria.”

“ No, Carl. You are not formed—you are like an infant—your heart tells itself out—one may count its beats, and sing songs to them, as Florimond says; but your brain keeps you back, though it is itself so forward.”

I was utterly puzzled. “ I don’t understand, Maria.”

“ But you will, some time. Your brain is burning—busy—always dreaming, and working. The dreams of the brain are often those which play through the slumbers of the heart. If your heart even awoke, your brain would still have the upper hand, and would keep down—keep back your heart. There is no fear for you, Carl, passionate as you are.”

“ Well, Maria, I must confess it frightens me a little when you talk so; first, because you are so young yourself; and, secondly, because, if it is all true, how much you must know—you must know almost more than you feel; it is too much for a girl to know, or a boy either, and I would rather know nothing than so very much.”

“ Carl, all that I know I get from my heart. I am really excessively ignorant, and can teach and tell of nothing in the world but love. That is my life and my faith; and when my heart is bathing in the love that is my own on earth, all earth seems to sink beneath my feet, and I tremble as if raised to heaven. I feel as if God were behind my joy, and as if it must be more than every other knowledge to make me feel so. And when I sing it is the same—the music wraps up the love—I feel it more and more.”

“ But, Maria, you are so awfully musical.”

“ Carl, till I knew Florimond I never really sang. I

practised, it is true, and was very sick of failures; but *then* my voice grew clear and strong, and I found what it was meant for; therefore I cannot be so musical as you are. And I revere you for it, Carl, and prophesy of you such performances that you can never excel them, however much you excel."

"Why, Maria, how we used to talk about music together!"

"I did not know you so well then, Carl; but do you suppose that music, in one sense, is not all to me? I sometimes think when women try to rise too high, either in their deeds or their desires, that the spirit which bade them so rise sinks back again beneath the weakness of their earthly constitution, and never appeals again—or else that the spirit, being too strong, does away with the mortal altogether—they die, or rather they live again."

"Do you ever talk in this strange manner to Anastase, Maria? I mean, do you tell him you love him better than music?"

"He knows of himself, not but that I have often told him; but you may imagine how I love him, Carl, when I tell you he loves music better than me, and yet I would have it so; chiefly for one reason."

"What is that?"

"That if I am taken from him he will still have something to live for, until we meet again."

It is a strange truth that I was unappalled and scarcely touched by these pathetic hints of hers—in fact, looking at her then, it was as impossible to associate with her radiant beauty any idea of death, as for any but the most tasteless moralist to attach it to a new-blown rose-flower, with stainless petals. It was a day also of the most perfect weather, and the suggestion to my mind was, that neither the day nor she—neither the brilliant vault above nor those transparent eyes, could ever "change or pass." I was occupied besides in reflecting upon the mystery that divided the two souls I felt ought never to have been separated, even *thought* of, apart. I did not know then how far she was right in her mystical assertion that the premature fulness of the brain maintains the heart's first slumber in its longest unbroken rest.

CHAPTER XXXVII

I LEFT her at her house and returned to Cecilia, feeling very lonely, and as if I ought to be very miserable, but I could not continue it; for I was, instead of recalling her words, in a mood to recall those of Clara in our parting conversation. The same age as Maria, with no less power in her heavenly maidenhood; she came upon me as if I had seen them together, and watched the strange calm distance of those unclouded eyes next the transparent fervours of Maria's soul; that soul in its self-betrayal so wildly beautiful, so undone with its own emotion. Clara I remembered as one not to be approached or reached, but by fathoming her crystal intellect; and even then it appeared to me that there was more passion in her enshrining stillness than in anything but the music that claimed and owned her. But Maria had seemed on fire as she had spoken, and even when she spoke not she passed into the very heart by sympathy abounding, summer-like. I little thought how soon, in that respect, her change would come.

There was one, too, whom I saw not again until that change. Over this leaf of my history I can only glance, for it would be as a sheet of light unrelieved by any shade or pencilling; suffice it to say, that day by day, in morning's golden dream, at dream-like afternoon, I studied and soared. I was—after the Chevalier had left, and the excitement of his possible presence had ceased—blissfully happy again, and in much the same state as when I lived with Aronach; certainly I did not expand, as Maria might have said. The advent of the Chevalier, which was as a king's visit, being delayed until the spring, I had left off hoping he might appear any fine morning, and my initiation—"by trance"—went on apace; I was utterly undisturbed.

At Christmas we had a concert—a concert worthy of the name—and with all the Christmas heartedness of Germany we dressed our beloved hall with its evergreens and streamers. Besides that overture, the "*Mer de Glace*," which, even under an inferior conductor, would make its way, was one of our interpretations, and it appeared to have some effect upon the whole crew that was not very material; as nothing would do in our after sledging party, but that all the instruments should be carried also, and an attempt made to refrigerate the ice-movement over again, by performing it in the frosty air, upon

the frost-spelled water. I was to have gone to England this year as arranged, but the old-fashioned frump, a very hard winter, had laid in great stores of snow, with great raving winds; and my mother took fright at the idea of my crossing the water; besides it was agreed that as Millicent and Davy had seen me so lately, I could get on very well as I was until June.

It was not such a disappointment as it should have been, for I knew that Clara had gone to London, and that I could not have seen her—she was making mysterious progress, according to Davy, but I could not get out all I wanted, for I did not like to ask for it. There was something, too, in my present mode of life exiling from all excitement; and it is difficult for me to look back and believe it anything but the dream of fiction: still that is not strange, for fiction often strikes us as more real than fact.

I had a small letter from Starwood about this time:—

“Dearest Carl,” he wrote, as he always spoke to me, in English, “I wish you could see the Chevalier now, how well he looks, and how he enjoys this beautiful country. We have been to see all the pictures, and the palaces, and all the theatres; we have heard all the cathedral services, and climbed over all the mountains; for, Carl, we went also to Switzerland, and when I saw the ‘Mer de Glace,’ I thought it was like that music. *Now* we are in a villa all marble, not white, but a soft pale grey colour, and there are orange trees upon the grass. All about are green hills, and behind them hills of blue, and the sky here is like no other sky, for it is always the same without clouds, and yet as dark as our sky at night, but yet at the same time it is day and the sun is very clear. The moon and stars are big, but there is something in the air that makes me always want to cry. It is melancholy, and a very quiet country; it seems quite dead after Germany, but then we do live away from the towns.

“The Chevalier is writing continually, except when he is out, and the Herr Aronach is very good, does not notice me much, which I like. His whole thoughts are upon the Chevalier, I think, and no wonder. Carl, I am getting on fast with my studies, am learning Italian,” etc. There was more in the little letter, but from such a babe I could not expect the information I wanted. Maria and her suite—as I always called her brother Joseph and the little Josephine—had left Cecilia for Christmas Day, which they were to spend with some acquaintance a few leagues off, and a friend, too, of Anastase, who, indeed, accom-

panied them. On Christmas Eve I was quite alone; for though I had received many invitations I had accepted none, and I went over to the old place where I had lived with Aronach, to see the illuminations in every house. It was a chilly, elfin time to me, but I got through it, and sang about the angels in the church next day.

To my miraculous astonishment Maria returned alone, long before Josephine and her brother, and even without Anastase. He, it appeared, had gone to Paris to hear a new opera, and also to play at several places on the road. It was only five days after Christmas that she came and fetched me from my own room, where I was shut in practising, to her own home. When she appeared, rolled in furs, I was fain to suppose her another than herself, produced by the oldest of all old gentlemen for my edification, and I screamed aloud, for she had entered without knocking, or I had not heard her. She would not speak to me then and there, saving only to invite me, and on the road, which was lightened over with snow, she scarcely spoke more; but, arrived on that floor I was so fond of, and screened by the winter hangings from the air, while the soft warmth of the stove bade all idea of winter make away, we sat down together upon the sofa to talk. I inquired why she had returned so soon.

"Carl," she said, smoothing down her hair, and laying over my knees the furry cloak, "I am altering very much, I think, or else I have become a woman too suddenly. I don't care about these things any longer."

"What things, Maria? fur mantles, or hair so long that you can tread upon it?"

"No, Carl. But I forget that I was not talking to you yesterday, nor yet the day before, nor for many days; and I have been dreaming more than ever since I saw you."

"What about?"

"Many unknown things; chiefly how different everything is here from what it ought to be. Carl, I used to love Christmas, and Easter, and St. John's Day; now they are all like so many cast-off children's pictures. I can have no imagination, I am afraid; or else it is all drawn away somewhere else. Do you know, Carl, that I came away because I could not bear to stay with those creatures after Florimond was gone? Florimond is, like me, a dreamer too; and much as I used to wonder at his melancholy, it is just now quite clear to me that nothing else is worth while."

"Anastase melancholy? Well, so he is, except when he is playing; but then I fancied that was because he is so abstracted, and so bound to music hand and foot, as well as heart and soul."

"Very well, Carl, you are always right; but my melancholy, and such I believe his to be, is exquisite pleasure, too fine a joy to breathe in, Carl. How people fume themselves about affairs that only last an hour, and music and joy are for ever."

"You have come back to music, Maria; if so, I am not sorry you went away."

"I never left it, Carl, it left me; but now I know why; it went to heaven to bring me a gift out of its eternal treasure, and I believe I have it. Carl! Carl! my fit of folly has served me in good stead."

"You mean what we talked about before you went, before the Chevalier went also?"

"Yes, I meant what I said then; but I was very empty and in an idle frame. I thought the last spark of music had passed out of me, but there has come a flame from it at last."

"What do you mean? and what has that to do with your coming back, and with your being melancholy? which I cannot believe quite, Maria?"

"Oh, Carl! I am very ignorant, and have read no books, but I am pretty sure it is said somewhere that melancholy is but the shadow of too much happiness, thrown by our own spirits upon the sunshine side of life. I was in that queer mood when I went to Obertheil that if an angel had walked out of the clouds I should not have taken the trouble to watch him. Florimond was all and enough. So he is still; but listen, Carl. On Christmas we were in the large room, before the table, where the green moss glittered beneath the children's tree, and there were children of all sizes gazing at the lights. They crowded so together that Florimond, who was behind, and standing next me, said, 'Come, Maria, you have seen all this before, shall we go upstairs together?' And we did go out, silently, we were not even missed. We went to the room which Florimond had hired, for it was only a friend's house, and Florimond is as proud as some one who has not his light hair. The little window was full of stars; we heard no sound as we stood there except when the icicles fell from the roof. The window was open too; but I felt no cold, for he held me in his arms, and I sheltered him and he me. We watched the stars so long that

they began to dance below before we spoke. Then Florimond said that the stars often reminded him how little constancy there was in anything said or done, for that they ever shone upon that which was forgotten. And I replied it was well that they did so, for many things happened which had better be forgotten, or something as unmeaning. He said, then, it was on that account we held back from expressing, even remotely, what we felt most. And I asked him whether it might not rather be that music might maintain its privilege of expressing what it was forbidden to pronounce or articulate otherwise. Then he suggested that it was forbidden to an artist to exalt himself in his craft, as he is so fond of saying, you know, except by means of it, when it asserts itself. And then I demanded of him that he should make it assert itself; and after I had tormented him a good while, he fetched out his violin and played to me a song of the stars.

"And in that wilderness of tone I seemed to fall asleep and dream—a dream I have already begun to follow up, and *will* fulfil. I have heard it said, Carl, that sometimes great players who are no authors, have given ideas in their random moments to the greatest writers, that these have reproduced at leisure—I suppose, much as a painter takes notions from the coloured clouds and verdant shadows, but I don't know. Florimond, who is certainly no writer, has given me an idea for a new musical poem, and what is more strange I have half-finished it, and have the whole in my mind."

"Maria! have you actually been writing?" I sprang from the sofa quite wild, though I merely foresaw some touching memento in wordless lied or scherzo for one-voiced instrument; of a one-hearted theme.

"I have not written a note, Carl; that remains to be done, and that is why I came back so soon, to be undisturbed, and to learn of you, for you know more about these things than I do—for instance, how to arrange a score."

"Maria, you are not going to write in score?—if so, pray wait until the Chevalier comes back."

"The Chevalier! as if I should ever plague him about my writing. Besides, I am most particularly anxious to finish it before any one knows it is begun."

"But, Maria, what will you do? I never heard of a woman writing a score except for exercise, and how will you be pleased to hear it never once?"

"Ah! we shall know about that when it is written."

"Maria, you look very evil—evil as an elf; but you are pale enough already. What if this work make you ill?"

"Nothing ever makes us ill that we like to do, only what we like to have. I acknowledge, Carl, that it might make me ill if this symphony were to be rehearsed, with a full band, before the Chevalier. But as nothing of that kind can happen, I shall take my own way."

"A symphony, Maria? The Chevalier says, that the symphony is the highest style of music, and that none can even attempt it but the most formed, as well as naturally framed musicians."

"I should think I knew that, but it is not in me to attempt any but the highest effect. I would rather fail there than succeed in an inferior. The structure of the symphony is quite clear to my brain, it always has been so, for I believe I understand it naturally, though I never knew why until now. Carl, a woman has never yet dared anything of the kind, and if I wait a few years longer I must give it up entirely. If I am married, my thoughts will not make themselves ready, and now they haunt me."

"Maria, do *not* write! Wait, at least, until Anastase returns, and ask his own advice."

"Carl, I never knew you cold before; what is it? As if Florimond could advise me! Could I advise him how to improve his present method? and why should I wait? I shall not expose myself; it is for myself alone."

"Maria, this is the reason. You do look so fixed and strange, even while you talk about it, that I think you will do yourself some harm; that is all; you did not use to look so."

"Am I so frightful then, Carl?"

"You are too beautiful, Maria; but your eyes seem to have no sleep in them."

"They have not had, and they will not have until I have completed this task the angel set me."

"Oh, Maria! you are thinking of the Chevalier."

"I was not; I was thinking of St. Cecilia. If the Chevalier had ordered me to make a symphony, I should to everlasting have remained among the dunces."

I often, often lament, most sadly, that I am obliged to form her words into a foreign mould, almost at times to fuse them with my own expression; but the words about the angel were exactly her own, and I have often remembered them bitterly.

"You will find it very hard to write without any prospect of rehearsal, Maria."

"I can condense it, and so try it over; but I am certain of hearing it in my head, and that is enough."

"You will not think so still when it is written. How did it first occur to you?"

"In a moment, as I tell you, Carl; while the violin tones, hot as stars that are cold in distance, were dropping into my heart. The subjects rose in Alps before me. I both saw and heard them; there were vistas of sound, but no torrents; it was all glacier-like—death enfolding life."

"What shall you call it, Maria?"

"No name, Carl. Perhaps I shall give it a name when it shall be really finished; but if it is to be what I expect, no one would remember its name on hearing it."

"Is it so beautiful, then, Maria?"

"To my fancy, *most* beautiful, Carl."

"That is like the Chevalier."

"He has written, and knows what he has written; but I do not believe he has ever felt such satisfaction in any work as I in this."

"I think in any one else it would be dreadfully presumptuous; in you it is ambitious, I believe; but I have no fear about your succeeding."

"Thank you, Carl; nor I. Will you stay here with me, and help me?"

"No, Maria, for you do not want help, and I should think no one could write unless alone. But I will prevent any one else from coming."

"No one else will come; but if you care to stay here, Carl, I can write in my room, and you, as you said you have set yourself certain tasks, can work in this one. I am very selfish, I am afraid, for I feel pleasantly safe when you are near me. I think, Carl, you must have been a Sunday-child."

"No, Maria; I was born upon a Friday, and my mother was in a great fright. Shall you write this evening?"

"I must go out and buy some paper."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

WE dined together, and then walked. I cannot record Maria's conversation, for her force now waned, and I should have had to entertain myself but for the unutterable entertainment at all times to me of a walk. She bought enough paper to score a whole opera had she been so disposed; and her preparations rather scared me on her account. For me, I returned to Cecilia, to inform our powers why I should absent myself, and where remain; and when I came back with "books and work" of my own, she was very quietly awaiting me for supper; certainly not making attempts, either dread or ecstatic, at present. I was, indeed, anxious that if she accomplished her intentions at all, it should be in the vacation, as she studied so ardently at every other time; and it was this anxiety that induced me to leave her alone the next day, and every morning of that week. I knew nothing of what she did meanwhile, and as I returned to Cecilia every night for sleep, I left her ever early, and heard not a note of her progress; whether she made any or not, remaining at present a secret.

We reassembled in February. At our first meeting, which was a very festive banquet, our nominal head and the leading professors gave us an intimation that the examinations would extend for a month, and would begin in May; when the results would be communicated to the Chevalier Seraphael, who would be amongst us again at that time, and distribute the prizes after his own device; also confer the certificates upon those who were about to leave the school. I was not, of course, in this number, as the usual term of probation was three years in any specific department, and six for the academical course—the latter had been advised for me by Davy, and acceded to by my mother. I gave up at present nearly my whole time to mastering the mere mechanism of my instrument, and had no notion of trying for any prize at all. I believe those of my contemporaries who aspired thus were very few at all, and Marc Iskar being among them had the effect upon me of quenching the slight fever of a desire I might have had so to distinguish myself. It struck me that Maria should try for the reward of successful composition; but she was so hurt, and looked so white, when I alluded to it, that it was only once I did so. As to her proceedings, whatever they were, the most

perfect calm pervaded them, and also her. I scarcely now heard her voice in speech; though it was spoken aloud by Spoda, and no longer whispered, that she would very soon be fit for the next initiation into a stage career, or its attendant and inductive mysteries. One evening I went to see her expressly to ascertain whether she would really leave us, and I asked her also about her intentions.

"Carl," she said, "I wish I had any. I don't really care what they do with me, though I wish to be able to marry as soon as possible. I believe I am to study under Mlle. Venelli, at Berlin, when I leave Cecilia. She teaches declamation, and that style."

"Maria, you are very cool about it. I suppose you don't mind a bit about going."

"I should break my heart about it if I did not know I must go one day, and that the sooner I go the sooner I shall return—to all I want, at least. But I have it not in my power to say I will do this, or will not have that, as it is my brother who educates me, and to whom I am indebted."

"If you go, Maria, I shall not see you for years and years."

"You will not mind that after a little time."

"Maria, I have never loved to talk to any one so well."

"If that is the only reason you are sorry, I am very glad I go."

She smiled as she spoke, but not a happy smile. I could see she was very sad; and, as it were, at a distance from her usual self.

"Maria, you have not told me one word about the symphony."

"You did not ask me."

"Were you so proud, then? As if I was not dying to see it—to hear it. For, Maria, don't tell me you would be contented without its being heard?"

"I am not contented at all, Carl. I am often discontented—particularly now."

"About Anastase? Does not Anastase approve of your writing?"

"He knows nothing of it. I would not tell him for a world; nor, Carl, would you."

"I don't know. I would tell him if it would do you any good, even though you disliked me to do so."

"Thanks; but it would do me no good. Florimond is poor: he could not collect an orchestra; and proud: he would not like me to be laughed at."

"Then what is it, Maria?"

"Carl, you know I am not vain."

I laughed, but answered nothing; it was too absurd a position.

"Well, I am dying of thirst to hear my first movement, which is written, and which is that sight to my eyes that my ears desire it to the full as much as they. The second still lingers—it will not be invoked. I could, if I could calculate the effect of the first, produce a second equal to it, I know. But as it is yet in my brain, it will not give place to another."

"You have tried it upon the piano—try it for me."

"No; I cannot, Carl. It is nothing thus; and, strange to say, though I have written it, I cannot play it."

"I can believe that."

"But no one else would, Carl; and therefore it must be folly for me to have undertaken this writing; for we are both children, and I suppose must remain so, after all."

It struck me that the melancholy which poured that pale mask upon her face was both natural and not unnecessary—I even delighted in it—for a thought, almost an idea, flashed straight across my brain, and lighted up the future, that was still to remain my own, although that dazzle was withdrawn. I knew what to do now, though I trembled lest I should not find the way to do it.

"So, Maria, you are not going to finish it just now. Suppose you lend it to me for a little. I should like to examine it, and it will do me good."

"Carl, it is not sufficiently scientific to do you good; but I wish you would take it away, for if I keep it with me, I shall destroy it; and I shall like it to remain until some day, when God has taught me more than in myself I know, or that I can learn of men."

"I will take the greatest care of it, Maria," I said, almost fearing it to be a freak on her part that she suffered my possession, or that she might withdraw it. "You will ask me for it when you want it; and, Maria, I have heard it said that it is a good thing to let your compositions lie by, and come to them with a fresh impression."

"That is exactly what I think. You see with me, Carl, that all which has to do with music is not music now."

"I think that there is less of the world in music than in anything else, even in poetry, Maria. But, of course, music must itself fall short of our ideas of it; and I dare say you

found that your beautiful feelings would not change themselves into music exactly as beautiful as they were. I know very little music yet, Maria; but I never found *any* that did not disappoint my feeling about it when I was hearing it, except the Chevalier's."

"That is it, Carl. What am I to endeavour after anything that he has accomplished? But I feel that if I could not produce the very highest musical work in the very highest style, I would not produce any, and would rather die."

"I cannot understand that. I would rather worship than be worshipped."

"I would not. I cannot tell why, but I have a feeling, which will not let me be content with proving what has gone before me. Dearly as I love Florimond, he could not put this feeling out of me. I am not content to be an actress. There have been actresses who were queens, and some few angels. I know my heart is pure in its desires, and I should have no objection to reign. But it must be over a new kingdom. No woman has ever yet composed."

"Oh, yes, Maria."

"I say no to you, Carl. Not as I mean. I mean no woman has been supreme among men, as the Chevalier among musicians. I have often wondered why. And I feel—at least, I did feel—that I could be so, and do this. But I feel it no longer—it has passed. Carl, I am very miserable, and cast down."

I could easily believe it; but I was too young to trust to my own decision. Had Clara been speaking, I should have implicitly relied, for she always knew herself. But Maria was so wayward, so fitful, and, of late, so peculiar, that I dared not entertain that confidence in her genius, which was yet the strongest presentiment that had ever taken hold upon me. I carried away the score, which I had folded up while she had spoken; and I shall never forget the half-forlorn, half-wistful look with which she followed it in my arms as I left her. But I dared not stay for fear she should change her mind; and although I would fain have entered into her heart to comfort her, I could not even try. I was in a breathless state to see that score, but not much came to my examination. The sheets were exquisitely written, the manner of Seraphael being exactly imitated, or naturally identical—the very noting a facsimile, as well as the autograph. It was styled, "First Symphony," and the key was F minor. But the composition

was so full and close as to swamp completely my childish criticism. I thought it appeared all right, and very, very wonderful; but that was all. I wrapped it in one of my best silk handkerchiefs, to keep it from the dust, and laid it away in my box, together with my other treasures from home, which ever reposed there; and then I returned to my work, but certainly more melancholy than I had ever remembered myself in life.

In March, one day, Maria stayed from school, but her brother, Joseph, brought me from her a message. She was indisposed, or said to be so, and begged me to go and see her. There was no difficulty in doing so, but I was surprised that Anastase should not be with her; or, at least, that he should appear, as he did, so unconcerned. When I expressed my regret to Joseph Cerinthia, he added that she was only in bed for a cold. I was both pleased and flattered that she had sent for me, but still could not comprehend it, as she was so little ill. I ran down, after the morning, intending to dine with her, or not, I did not care which. But instead of her being in bed, she was in the parlour.

“I thought, Maria, you were not up.”

“I was not; and now I am not dressed. Carl, I sent for you to ask for the manuscript again.”

I looked at her to see whether she meant her request, for it was by no means easy to say. She looked very brilliant, but had an unusual darkness round her eyes—a wide ring of the deepest violet. She either had wept forth that shadow, or was in a peculiar state. Neither tears nor smiles were upon her face, and her lips burned with a living scarlet—no rose-soft red as wont. Her hair, fastened under her cap in long bands, fell here and there, and seemed to have no strength. She had been drinking *eau sucrée*, for a glass of it was upon the table, and a few fresh flowers, which she hastened to put away from her as I entered. I was so much affected by her looks, though no fear seized me, that I took her hand. It was dry and warm, but very weak and tremulous.

“Maria, you were at that garden last night, and danced. I knew how it would be; it was too early in the year.”

“I was not at the Spiélheim, for when Florimond said none of you were going from Cecilia, I declined. But no dancing would have made me ill as I have been; it was nothing to care for, and is now past.”

“Was it cold, then? it seems more like fever.”

"It was neither, or perhaps a little of both. Let me have my score again, Carl. I need only ask for it, you know, as it is mine."

"You need not be so proud, Maria. I shall, of course, return it, but not unless you promise me to do no more to it just now."

"Not *just* now. But I made believe to be ill on purpose that I might have a day's leisure. I must also copy it out.

"Maria, you never made believe, for if you *could* tell a lie, it would not be for yourself. You *have* been ill, and I suspect much that I know how. If you will tell me, I will fetch the score—that is, if it is good for you to have it. But I would rather burn it than that it should hurt you; and I tell you, it all depends upon that."

"I will tell you, Carl, and more, because it is over now, and cannot happen again. I was lying in my bed, and heard the clock strike ten. I thought also that I had heard it rain; so I got up, and looked out. There was no rain, but there were stars; and, seeing them, my thoughts grew bright—bright as when I imagined that music; and being in the same mood, that is quiet and yet excited, if you can believe in both together, I went to my writing. It was all there ready for me; and Josephine, who always disturbs me, because she talks, was very fast asleep. It may sound proudly, Carlino; but I am certain the Chevalier was with me—that he stood behind my chair, and I could not look round for fear of seeing him. He guided my hand—he thrust out my ideas—all grew clear; and I was not afraid, even of a ghost companion."

"But the Chevalier is alive, and well."

"And yet I tell you, his ghost was with me. Well, Carl, I had written until I could not see, for my lamp went out, and it was not yet light. I suppose I then fell asleep, for I certainly had a vision."

"What was that, Maria?"

"Countless crowds, Carl, first; and then a most horrible whirl and rush. Then a serene place, grey as morning before the sun, with great golden organ-pipes, that shot up into and cut through the sky; for although it was grey beneath, and I seemed to stand upon clouds, it was all blue over me, and when I looked up, it seemed to return my gaze. I heard a sound under me, like an orchestra, such as we have often heard. But *above*, there was another music, and the golden pipes quivered as if with its trembling; yet it was not the organ

that seemed to speak, and no instrument was there besides. This music did not interfere with the music of the orchestra—still playing onwards—but it swelled through and through it, and seemed to stretch like a sky into the sky. Oh, Carl, that I could describe it to you! It was like all we feel of music—beyond all we hear, given to us in hearing.”

She paused. Now a light, quenched in thrilling tears, arose, and glittered from her eyes. She looked over-wrought, seraphic; for though her hand, which I still held, was not changed or cold, her countenance told unutterable wonder—the terrors of the heavenliest enthusiasm, I knew not how to account for.

“Maria, dear! I have had quite as strange dreams, and almost as sweet. It was very natural, but you were very, very naughty all the same. What did you do when you awoke?”

“I awoke I don’t know how, Carl, nor when; but I resolved to give into my symphony all that the dream had given me; and I wrote again. This time I left off, though in a very odd manner. The clock struck five, and all the people were in the streets. I was cold, which I had forgotten, and my feet were quite as ice. I was about to turn a leaf when I shivered, and dropped my pen. But when I stooped down to find it in the early twilight, which, I thought, would help me, I fell upon the floor. My head was as if fire had burst into it, and a violent pain came on, that drove me to my bed. I have had such a pain before a little, but very much less, for I believed I could not bear it. I did fall asleep, too, for a long time, and never heard a sound; and when I arose, I was as well as I need to be, or ever expect. But, as I don’t wish to be ill again, I must finish the symphony at once.”

“So you think I shall allow it? No, Maria; it is out of the question, but I will fetch a doctor for you.”

“Carl, you are a baby. I have seen a doctor in Paris for this very pain. He can do nothing for it, and says it is constitutional, and that I shall always be subject to it. Everybody has something they are subject to: Florimond has the gout.”

I laughed—glad to have anything at all to laugh at.

“I am really well now, Carl—have had a warm bath, and leeches upon my temples—everything. The woman here has waited upon me, and has been very kind; and now I have sent her away, for I do hate to seem ill, and be thought ill.”

"Leeches, Maria?"

"Oh, that is nothing. I put them on whenever I choose. Did you never have them on, Carl?"

"No, never. I had a blister for the measles, because I could not bear to think about leeches. I did not know people put them on for the headache."

"I always do, and so does everybody for such headaches as mine. But they have taken away the pain, and that is all I care for. They are little, cold creepers, though; and I was glad to pull them off."

"Show me the marks, Maria."

She lifted her beautiful soft hair. Those cruel little notches were some hieroglyph to me of unknown suffering that her face expressed, though I was too young, and far too ignorant, to imagine of what kind and import.

"I promise you, Maria, that if you attempt to write any more, I will tell Anastase. Or no—I have thought of something far more clever. I will make off with the rest at once."

I had an idea of finding her sheets in her own room; and, plunging into it—frightening Josephine, who was nursing her doll—into a remote corner, I gathered all the papers, and, folding them together, was about to rush downstairs without returning to Maria, when she called upon me so that I dared not help listening. For, "You dare not do it, Carl!" she cried. "You will kill me, and I shall die now."

Agonised by her expression, which was not even girl-like, I halted for an instant at her open door.

"Then, Maria, if I leave them here, on your honour, will you not touch them, or attempt to write?"

"It is not your affair, Carl, and I am angry."

She showed she was angry—very pale, with two crimson spots, and she bit her lip almost black.

"It *is* my affair, as you told *me*, and not your brother or Florimond. He or Florimond would not allow it, you know as well as I do."

"They should, and would. And, pray, why is it I am not to write? I should say you were jealous, Carl, if you were not Carl. But you have no right to forbid it, and shall not."

"I do not know how to express my fears, but I am afraid; and, Maria, I will not let it be done."

Lest I should commit myself, I closed the door, stumbled down the dark staircase, tore through the street, and deposited the sheets with the others in the box. I am conscious these

details are tedious and oppressive, but they cannot be withheld, because of what I shall have to touch upon.

Fearful were the consequences that descended upon my devoted head. I little expected them, and suffered from them absurdly, child as I was, and most restless at that time. Maria returned on the following day week, and looking quite herself, except for those violet shades, yet lingering—still not herself to me in any sense. She scarcely looked at me, and did not speak to me at all when I managed to meet her. Anastase alone seemed conscious that she had been ill. He appeared unable to rid himself of the impression; for actually during my lesson, when his custom was to eschew a conventionalism even as a wrong note, he asked me what had been the matter with her. I told him I believed a very awful headache, with fever, and that I considered she had been very ill indeed. I saw his face cloud, though he made reply all coolness, "You are mistaken, Auchester. It was a cold, which always produces fever, and often pain." Thus, we were all alike deluded—thus, was that motherless one hurried to her Father's house!

Meantime, silent as I kept myself on the subject of the symphony, it held me day by day more firmly. I longed almost with suffering for the season when I should emancipate myself from all my doubts.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE season came, and I shall never forget its opening. It was late in April, exquisite weather, halcyon, blooming; my memory expands to it now. From Italy he returned. He came upon us suddenly; there was no time to organise a procession, to marshal a welcome chorus; none knew of his arrival until he appeared.

We had been rambling in the woods, Franz and I, and were lounging homewards, laden with wild flowers and lily-bunches, Franz was a kind creature to me now, and in my loneliness I sought him always. We heard, even among the moss, a noise of distant shoutings—nobody shouted in that spot except our own—and we hurried homewards. I was quite faint with expectation, and being very weary sat down to rest on one of those seats that everywhere invite in shady places, while Delemann sped onwards for information.

Returning, he announced most gleefully, "The Chevalier has arrived; they are drawing the carriage up the hill." I am ashamed of what I did. I could not return to Cecilia; I wandered about in the village possessed by a vague aspiration that I should see him there, or that he would espy me: no such thing.

I came back to supper, excited, expectant; he was gone. I deserved it, and felt I did, for my cowardice; but at the end of supper, the head of the central table, having waited until then, deliberately took from his deep pocket and presented me with a note, a very tiny note, that was none the fresher for having lain an hour or two amidst snuff and "tabac." But this noting almost set me raving. It was short indeed, yet honey sweet.

"I am not to find you here, my Carl, although I came on purpose. Art not thou still my eldest child? Come to me then, to-morrow, it will be thy Sunday, and thy room shall be ready; also two little friends of thine, I and he. Do not forget me—thine, Seraphael."

He had made every arrangement for my visit, and I never think of his kindness in these particulars, without being reminded that in proportion to the power of his genius was it ever beneficently gentle. I spent such an afternoon as would have been cheaply purchased by a whole life of solitude; but I must only advert to one circumstance that distinguished it.

We were walking upon the lovely terrace, amongst bright marbles just arranged, and dazzling flowers; he was gentle, genial, animated—I felt my time was come. I, therefore, taught myself to say—"Sir, I have a very, most particular favour to ask of you; it is that you will condescend to give me your opinion of a piece of music which some one has written: I have brought it with me on purpose—may I fetch it? it is in my hat in the house."

"By all means, this very moment, Carlomein; or, no, rather we will go in doors together, and examine it quietly. It is thine own, of course?"

"Oh, no, Sir! I should have said so directly. It is a young lady's, and she knows nothing of my bringing it. I stole it from her."

"Ah! true," he replied, simply; and led me to that beautiful music-room. I was fain to realise Maria's dream as I beheld those radiant organ-pipes beneath their glorious arch—that deep-wooded pianoforte, with its keys milk-white and satin-soft, recalling me but to that which was lovelier than her very

vision—the lustrous presence pervading that luxury of artistic life. Seraphael was more innocent, more brilliant in behaviour at his home than anywhere; the noble spaces and exquisitely-appointed rooms seemed to affect him merely as secluded warmth affects an exotic flower; he expanded more fully, fragrantly, in the rich repose.

At the cedar writing-table he paused, and stood waiting silently while I fetched the score. As I unfolded it before him, I was even more astonished than ever at the perfection of its appearance; I hesitated not the least to place it in those most delicate of all delicate hands. I saw his eyes, that seemed to have drawn into them the very violet of the Italian heaven, so dark they gleamed through the down-let lashes, fasten themselves eagerly for an instant upon the title sheet, where, after his own fashion, Maria had written her ancient name, “Cerinthia,” only, in the corner; but then he laid the score, having opened the first page, upon the table and knelt down before it, plunging his fingers into the splendid curls of his regal head, his very brow being buried in their shadow as he bent, bowed, leaned into the page, and page after page until the end.

With restless rapidity his hand flashed back the leaves—his eye drank the spirit of those signs; but he spoke not, stirred not; it seemed to me that I must not watch him, as I was doing most decidedly; and I disentangled myself from that reverie with a shock.

I walked to the carved music-stands; the painted music-cases. I examined the costly manuscripts and olden tomes arrayed on polished cabinets. I blinded myself with the sunshine streaming through stained compartments in the windows to the carnation-toned velvet of the furniture. I peered into the pianoforte, and yearned for it to awaken; and rested long and rapturously before a mighty, marble likeness of the self-crowned Beethoven. It was garlanded with grapes and vine leaves that fondled the wild locks in gracefullest fraternity; it was mounted upon a pedestal of granite, where also the alabaster fruits and tendrils clustered, clasping it like frozen summer, and beneath the bust his own investment glittered:—“Tonkunst’s Bacchus.” It was no longer difficult to pass away the time without being troublesome to myself or Seraphael. I was lost in a triumphant reminiscence that the stormy brow, the eyes of lightning, the torn heart, the weary soul, were now heaven’s light, heaven’s love, its calm, its gladness. For quite

an hour I stood there, so remembering and desiring ever to remember. And then that sweet, that living voice aroused me. Without looking up, he said—

“Do you mean to say, Carlomein, that she has had no help here?”

“Sir, she could have had none; it was all and entirely her own. No one knew she had written except myself.”

Then in his clearest tones he answered—“It is as I expected. It is terrible, Carlomein, to think that this work might have perished, and I embrace thee, Carlomein, for having secured to me its possession.”

“Is it so very good then, Sir? Maria was very ignorant about it, and could not even play it for herself.”

“I dare say not, she has made too full a score.” He smiled his sweetest smile; “but for all that, we will not strike out one note. Why is it not finished, Carlomein?”

I might have related the whole story from beginning to end; but his manner was very regal just now, and I merely said—“I rather think she was dissatisfied with the first two movements, for although she said she could finish it, she did not, and I have kept it some time.”

“You should have written to me, Carlomein, or sent it to me; it must and shall be finished. The work is of Heaven’s own. What earthly inspiration could have taught her strains like these? they are of a priestess and a prophetess—she has soared beyond us all.”

He arose suddenly, a fixed glow was upon his face, his eyes were one solemn glory. He came to the piano, he pushed me gently aside, he took his seat noiselessly as he began to play. I would not retire. I stood where I could both see and hear. It was the second movement that first arrested him. He gave to the white-faced keys a hundred voices. Tone upon tone was built; the chords grew larger and larger; no other hand could have so elicited the force, the burthen, the breadth of the orchestral medium, from those faint notes and few. His articulating finger supplied all needs of mechanism; he doubled and redoubled his power.

Never shall I forget it. The measures so long and lingering—the modulations so like his own—the very subject moulded from the chosen key like sculpture of the most perfect chiselling from a block of the softest grain—so appropriate, so masterly. But what pained me through the loveliness of the conception was to realise the mood suggesting it—a plaint of spiritual

suffering—a hungry and thirsting heart—a plea of exhausted sadness.

He felt it too; for as the weary, yet unreproachful strain fell from under his music-burdened fingers, he drooped his glorious head as a lily in the drenching rain—his lips grew grave; the ecstatic smile was lost, and in his eyes there was a dim expression though they melted not to tears. I was sure that Maria had conserved her dream, for a strange intermittent accompaniment streamed through the loftier appeal, and was as a golden mist over too much piercing brightness.

The movement was very long, and he never spoke all through it, neither when he had played as far as she had written; but turned back to the first, as yet untried.

Again was I forcibly reminded of what I had said on my first acquaintance with her; she had, without servile intention, caught the very spirit of Seraphael as it wandered through his compositions, and imprisoned it in the sympathy of her own. It was as two flowers whose form is single and the same, but the hues were of different distribution, and still his own supreme. I cannot describe the first movement further; I was too young to be astonished, carried away by the miracle of its consummation under such peculiar circumstances; but I can remember how completely I felt I might always trust myself in future when any one should gain such ascendancy over my convictions, which, by the way, never happened.

I must not dwell upon that evening; suffice it to say, that I left the score with the Chevalier, and though he did not tell me so in so many words, I felt sure he himself would restore it to the writer.

On Monday evening I was very expectant, and not in vain, for she sent me a note of invitation—an attention I had not received from her since my rebellious behaviour. She was alone, and even now writing; she arose hastily, and for some moments could not command her voice; she said what I shall not repeat, except that she was too generous as regarded her late distance; and then she explained what follows.

“The Chevalier came this morning, and, Carl, I could only send for you, because it is you who have done it all for me in spite of my ingratitude; and, alas! I never can repay you. I feel, Carl, now, that it is better not to have all one wishes for at once; if I had not waited the shock would have killed me.”

I looked at her—tried to make out to my sight that she did not, even now, look as if ready to die: her lips had lost their

fever rose, and were pale as the violets that strewed her eyes; the faint blue threads of veins on the backs of her hands, the thin polish of those temples standing clear from her darkest hair—these things burned upon my brain, and gave me a sickening thrill. I felt, can Anastase have seen her? can he have known this?

I was most of all alarmed at what I myself had done, still I was altogether surprised at the renewal of my fears; for on the Saturday she had not only seemed, but been herself; her cheeks, her lips, her brow, all wearing the old healthful radiance.

“Maria!” I exclaimed, “dear Maria, will you tell me why this symphony makes you ill, or look so ill? You were quite well on Saturday, I thought; or you may quite believe I should never have done what I did.”

“Do I look ill, Carl? I do not feel ill, only desperately excited. I have no headache, and what is better, no heart pain now. Do you know what is to be? I tell you, because you will rejoice that you have done it. This work is to be finished and to be heard. An orchestra will return my dream to God.”

“Ah! your dream, Maria; I thought of that. But shall I hear it, Maria?”

“You will play for me, Carl—and Florimond. Oh! I must not remember that. And the Chevalier, Carl. He even entreated, the proud soul—the divinely missioned—entreated me to perpetuate the work. I can write now without fear; he has made me free. I feared myself before, now I only fear him.”

“Maria, what of Anastase? Does he know, and what does he think?”

“Do not ask me, Carl; for I cannot tell you what he did. He was foolish, and so was I; but it was for joy on both our parts.”

“You cried then! There is nothing to be ashamed of.”

“We ought to have restrained ourselves when the Chevalier was by. He must love Florimond now, for he fetched him himself, and told him what I had done, and was still to do.”

It is well for us that time does not stay; not grievous, but a gladsome thought, that all we most dread is carried beyond our reach by its force, and that all we love and long to cherish is but taken that it may remain, beyond us, to ripen in eternity, until we too ripen to enjoy it. Still there is a pain wholly

untinctured with pleasure, in recalling certain of its shocks, re-living them, returning upon them with memory.

The most glorious of our days, however, strike us with as troubled a reminiscence, so that we ought not to complain, nor to desire other than that the past should rest, as it does, and as alone the dead beside repose—in hope. I have brought myself to the recollection of certain passages in my youth's history, simply because there is nothing more precious than the sympathy, so rare, of circumstance with passion; nothing so difficult to describe, yet that we so long to win.

It is seldom that what happens as chance we would have left unchanged, could we have passed sentence of our will upon it; but still more unwonted is it to feel, after a lapse of eventful times, that what *has* happened was not only the best, but the only thing to happen, all things considered that have intervened. This I feel now about the saddest lesson I learned in my exuberant boyhood—a lesson I have never forgotten, and can never desire to discharge from my life's remembrance.

Everything prospered with us after the arrangement our friend and lord had made for Maria. I can only say of my impressions that they were of the utmost perfectibility of human wishes in their accomplishment, for she had indeed nothing left to wish for.

I would fain delineate the singular and touching gratitude she evinced towards Seraphael, but it did not distribute itself in words; I believe she was altogether so much affected by his goodness that she dared not dwell upon it. I saw her constantly between his return and the approaching examinations; but our intercourse was still and silent. I watched her glide from room to room at Cecilia, or found her dark hair sweeping the score at home, so calmly—she herself calmer than the calmest—calm as Anastase himself. Indeed to him she appeared to have transferred the whole impetuousness of her nature; he was changed also, his kindness to myself warmer than it ever had been; but his brow oppressed, his air of agitation, I deemed him verily most anxious for the result. Maria had not more than a month to work upon the rest of the symphony and to complete it, as Seraphael had resolutely resolved that it should be rehearsed before our separation.

Maria I believe would not have listened to such an arrangement from any other lips; and Florimond's dissatisfaction at a premature publicity was such, that the Chevalier—autocratic even in granting a favour, which he must ever grant in his own

way—had permitted the following order to be observed in anticipation.

After our own morning performance by the pupils only and their respective masters, the hall would be cleared, the audience and members should disperse, and only the strictly required players for the orchestra remain; Seraphael himself having chosen these. Maria was herself to conduct the rehearsal, and those alone whose assistance she would demand had received an intimation of the secret of her authorship. I trembled when the concluding announcement was made to me, for I had a feeling that she could not be kept too quiet; also, Anastase, to my manifest appreciation, shared my fear; but Seraphael was irresistible, especially as Maria had assented, had absorbed herself in the contemplation of her intentions, even to eagerness, that they should be achieved.

Our orchestra was, though small, brilliant; and in such perfect training as I seldom experienced in England. Our own rehearsals were concluded by the week before our concert, and there remained rather less for me to do. Those few days I was inexpressibly wretched, a foreboding drowned my ecstatic hopes in dread; they became a constant effort to maintain, though even everything still smiled around us.

The Tuesday was our concert morning, and on the Sunday that week I met Maria as we came from church. She was sitting in the sunlight, upon one of the graves. Josephine was not near her, nor her brother; only Florimond, who was behind me, ran and joined her before I beheld that she beckoned to me. I did hardly like to go forward as they were both together, but he also made me approach by a very gentle smile. The broad lime-trees shadowed the church, and the blossoms, unopened, hung over them in ripest bud; it was one of those oppressively sweet seasons that remind one—at least me—of the resurrection morning.

"Sit down by me, Carl," said Maria, who had taken off her gloves, and was already playing with Florimond's fingers, as if she were quite alone with him, though the churchyard was yet half-filled with people.

"Maria," I said, sitting down at the foot of a cross that was hung with faded garlands, "why don't you sit in the shade? it is a very warm day."

"So it is very warm, and that is what I like; I am never warm enough here, and Florimond, too, loves the sun. I could not sit under a tree this day, everything is so bright, but

nothing can be as bright as I wish it. Carl, I was going to tell Florimond, and I will tell you, that I feel as if I were too glad to bear what is before me. I did not think so until it came so very near. I am afraid when I stand up my heart will fail."

"Are you frightened, Maria?" I asked in my simplicity.

"That is not it, though I am also frightened. But I feel as if it were scarcely the thing for me to do, to stand up and control those of whom I am not master. Is it not so, Florimond?"

"Maria, the Chevalier is the only judge; and I am certain you will not, as a woman, allow your feelings to get the better of you. I have a great deal more to suffer on your account than you can possibly feel.

"I do not see that."

"It is so, and should be seen by you. If your work should in any respect fail, imagine what that failure would cost me."

I looked up in utter indignation, but was disarmed by the expression of his countenance; a vague sadness possessed it, a certain air of tender resignation; his hauteur had melted, though his manner retained its distance.

"As if it could be a failure!" I exclaimed; "why we already know how much it is!"

"I do not, Auchester, and I am not unwilling to confess my ignorance. If our symphony even prove worthy of our Cecilia, I shall still be anxious."

"Why, Florimond?" she demanded, wistfully.

"On account of your health. You know what you promised me."

"Not to write for a year. That is easy to say."

"But not so easy to do. You make every point an extreme, Maria."

"I cannot think what you mean about my health."

"You cannot?"

She blushed lightly and frowned a shade. "I have told you, Florimond, how often I have had that pain before."

"And you told me also what they said."

His tones were now so grave that I could not bear to conjecture their significance. He went on.

"I do not consider, Maria, that for a person of genius it is any hardship to be discouraged from too much effort, especially when the effect will become enhanced by a matured experience."

"You are very unkind, Florimond."

Indeed, I thought so, too.

"I only care to please you."

"No, Maria, you had not a thought of me in writing."

"And yet you yourself gave me the first idea. But you are right; I wrote without reference to any one, and because I burned to do so."

"And you burn less now for it? tell me that."

"I do not burn any longer, I weary for it to be over; I desire to hear it once, and then you may take it away, and I will never see it any more."

"That is quite as unnatural as the excessive desire, to have fatigued of what you loved. But, Maria, I trust this weariness of yours will not appear before the Chevalier, after all his pains and interest."

"I hope so too, Florimond; but I do not know."

It did not. The next day the Chevalier came over to Cecilia, and slept that night in the village. The tremendous consequence of the next twenty-four hours might almost have erased, as a rolling sea, all identical remembrance; and, indeed, it has sufficed to leave behind it what is as but a picture once discerned, and then for ever darkened. The cool early romance of the wreaths and garlands—for we all rose at dawn to decorate the entrance, the corridors, the hall, the reception room—the masses of may-bloom and lilies that arrived with the sun; the wild beauty overhanging everything, the mysterious freshness, I have mentioned; or some effects just so conceived, before.

I myself adorned with laurels and lilies the conductor's desk, and the whole time as much in a dream as ever when asleep; at all events I could even realise less. Maria was not at hand, nor could I see her. She breakfasted alone with Anastase, and although I shall never know what happened between them that morning, I have ever rejoiced that she did so.

When our floral arrangements were perfected, I could not even criticise them. I flew to my bed and sat down upon it, holding my violin, my dearest, in my arms. There I rested, perhaps slept; strange thoughts were mine in that short time, which seemed immeasurably lengthening. Most like dreams, too, those very thoughts, for they were all rushing to a crisis. I recalled my cue, however, and what that alarming peal of a drum meant, sounding through the avenues of Cecilia.

As we ever cast off things behind, my passion could only hold upon the future. I was but, with all my speed, just in time to fall into procession with the rest. The chorus first singing, the band in the midst, behind our professors in order, and on

either side our own dark lines, the female pupils a double streak of white. I have not alluded to our examinations, with which, however, I had had little enough to do. But we all pressed forward in contemporaneous state, and so entered the antechamber of the hall. It was the most purely brilliant scene I ever saw; prepared under the eye of the masters in our universal absence; I could recognise but one taste, but one eye, one hand, in that blending of all deep with all most dazzling flower-tints.

One double garland, a harp in a circle, the symbol of immortal harmony, wrought out of snowy roses and azure ribbons, hung exactly above the table; but the table was itself covered with snowy damask, fold upon fluted fold, so that nothing, whatever lay beneath it, could be given to the gaze.

Through the antechamber to the decorated hall we passed, and then a lapse of music half restored me to myself; only half, despite the overture of his, with choral relief, with intersong, that I had never heard before, and that he had written only for us; despite his presence, his conducting charm.

In little more than an hour we returned, pell-mell now, just as we pleased, notwithstanding calls to order and the pulses of the measuring voices. Just then I found myself by Maria. Through that sea-like resonance she whispered—

“Do not be surprised, Carl, if the Chevalier presents you with a prize.”

“I have not tried for one, Maria.”

“I know that, but he will nevertheless distinguish you, I am certain of it.”

“I hope not. Keep near me, Maria.”

“Yes, surely, if I can; but, oh! Carl, I am glad to be near you. Is that a lyre above the table? for I can scarcely see.”

She was, as I expected, pale; not paler than ever; for it was very long since she had been paler than any one I ever saw, except the Chevalier. But his was as the lustre of the whitest glowing fire, hers was as the light of snow. She was all pale except her eyes, and that strange halo she had never lost shone dim as the darkest violets, a soft yet awful hue. I had replied to her question hurriedly, “Yes; and it must have taken all the roses in his garden.” And last of all, she said to me, in a tone which suggested more suffering than all her air—“I wish I were one of those roses.”

The table, when the rich cover was removed, presented a spectacle of fascination scarcely to be appreciated, except by

those immediately affected. Masses of magnificently bound volumes, painted and carved instrument cases, busts and portraits of the hierarchy of music, lay together in according contrast. For, as I have not yet mentioned, the Chevalier had carried out his abolition of the badges to the utmost; there was not a medal to be seen. But these prizes were beyond the worth of any medal, each by each. One after another left the table in those delicate hands, wafted to its fortunate possessor by a compliment more delicate still, and I fancied no more remained.

Maria still stood near me, and as the moments flew, a stillness more utter than I could have imagined pervaded her; a marbled quietness crept over every muscle; and as I met her exquisite countenance in profile with the eyes downward, and fixed, and not an eyelash stirring, she might have been the victim of despair, or the genius of enraptured hope.

I saw that the Chevalier had proceeded to toss over and over the flowers which had strewn the gifts—as if it were all, also, over now—and he so long continued to trifle with them, that I felt as if he saw Maria, and desired to attract from her all other eyes, for he talked the whole time lightly, laughingly, with an air of the most ravishing gaiety, to those about him, and to every one except ourselves.

In a few minutes, which appeared to be a very hour, he gathered up with a handful of flowers that he let slip through his fingers directly, something which he retained in his hand, and which it now struck me that he had concealed, whatever it was, by that flower-play of his all along—for it was even diffidently, certainly with reserve of some kind, that he approached us last, as we stood together and did not stir.

“These,” said he to me, in a voice that just trembled, though aerially joyous, “are too small to make speeches about; but, in memory of several secrets we have between us, I hope you will sometimes wear them.”

He then looked full at Maria, but she responded not even to that electric force that is itself the touch of light—her eyes still downcast, her lips unmoved. He turned to me, and softly, seriously, yet half surprised as it were, shook his head; placing in her hand the first of the unknown caskets he had brought, and the other in my own. She took it without looking up, or even murmuring her thanks; still, immediately as he returned to the table, I forced it from her, feeling it might and ought to occasion a revulsion of sensation, however slight.

It succeeded so far as that she gazed, still bending downwards, upon what I held in my own hand now, and exhibited to her. It was a full-blown rose of beaten silver, white as snow, without a leaf, but exquisitely set upon a silver stem, and having upon one of its broad petals a large dewdrop of the living diamond.

I opened my own strange treasure then, having resigned to her her own. This was a breastpin of purest gold, with the head—a great violet cut from a single amethyst—as perfectly executed as hers. I thrust it into my pocket, for I could not at that instant even rejoice in its possession. And now soon, very soon, the flower-lighted space was cleared; and we, the chosen few, alone remained.

My heart felt as if it could only break, so violent was the pulse that shook it. I knew that I must make an effort transcending all, or I should lose my power to handle the bow; and at least I achieved composure of behaviour. Anastase, I can remember, came to me; he touched my hand, and as if he longed, with all loosened passion, for something like sympathy, looked into my very eyes. I could scarcely endure that gaze—it was inquisitive to scrutiny, yet dim with unutterable forecast.

The flowers in the concert hall were already withering when, after a short separation for refreshment, we returned there and were shut in safely by the closed doors from the distant festal throng.

It was a strange sight—those deserted seats in front, where now none rested saving only the Chevalier; who, after hovering amidst the orchestra until all the ranks were filled, had descended, as was arranged, into the void space, that he might be prepared to criticise the performance. He did not seem much in the mood for criticism—his countenance was lightening with excitement—his eyes burned like stars brought near; that hectic fire, that tremulous blaze, were both for her.

As he retreated, and folding his slender arms, and raising his glorious head, still stood—Maria entered with Anastase. Florimond lead her forwards in her white dress, as he had promised himself to lead her captive on the day of her espousals; neither hurried nor abashed, she came in her virgin calm—her virgin paleness. But as they stood for one moment at the foot of the orchestra, he paused, arrested her, his hand was raised; and in a moment, with a smile, whose tenderness for that moment triumphed, he had placed the silver rose in her dark hair, where it glistened in angelic symbol to the recognition of every one

present. She did not smile in return, nor raise her eyes, but mounted instantly, and stood amidst us.

I had no idea until, indeed, she stood there, a girl amidst us—until she appeared in that light of which she herself was light—how very small she was, how slightly framed; every emotion was articulated by the fragility of her form as she stirred so calmly, silently. The bright afternoon from many windows poured upon the polish of her forehead, so arched, so eminent; but, alas! upon the languors also that had woven their awful mists around her eyes. Her softly curling lips spoke nothing now but the language of sleep in infancy, so gently parted, but not as in inspiration. As she raised that arm so calmly, and the first movement came upon me, I could not yet regard her, nor until a rest occurred. Then I saw her the same again, except that her eyes were filled with tears, and over all her face that there was a shadow playing as from some sweeping solemn wing, like the imagery of summer leaves that trembles upon a moonlit grass.

Only once I heard that music, but I do not remember it, nor can call upon myself to describe it. I only know that while in the full thrilling tide of that first movement, I was not aware of playing, or how I played, though very conscious of the weight upon my heart and upon every instrument. Even Anastase, next whom I stood, was not himself in playing. I cannot tell whether the conductress were herself unsteady, but she unnerved us all, or something to near unnerved us—we were noiselessly preparing for that which was at hand.

At the close of the movement a rushing cadence of ultimate rapidity broke from the stringed force, but the wind flowed in upon the final chords; they waned, they expanded, and, at the simultaneous pause, she also paused. Then strangely, suddenly, her arm fell powerless—her paleness quickened to crimson—her brow grew warm with a bursting blood-red blush—she sank to the floor upon her side, silently as in the south wind a leaf just flutters and is at rest; nor was there a sound through the stricken orchestra as Florimond raised her, and carried her from us in his arms.

None moved beside, except the Chevalier, who, with a gaze that was as of one suddenly blinded, followed Anastase instantaneously. We remained as we stood, in a suspense that I, for one, could never have broken. Poor Florimond's violin lay shattered upon the floor, the strings shivered, and yet shuddering; the rose lay also low. None gathered either up—

none stirred—nor any brought us word. I believe I should never have moved again if Delemann, in his living kindness, had not sped from us at last.

He, too, was long away—long, long to return; nor did he, in returning, re-enter the orchestra. He beckoned to me from the screen of the antechamber. I met him amidst the glorious garlands, but I made way to him I know not how. That room was deserted also, and all who had been there had gone. Whither? oh! where might they now remain? Franz whispered to me, and of his few sad words—half hope, half fear, all anguish—I cannot repeat the echo. But it is sufficient for all to remind myself how soon the hope had faded, after few, not many days; how the fear passed with it, but not alone. Yet, whatever passed, whatever faded, left us love for ever—love, with its dear regrets, its infinite expectations!

PART III—THE CROWN OF MARTYRDOM

CHAPTER XL

TWELVE years of after-life cannot but weigh lighter in the balance of recollection than half that number in very early youth. I think this now, pondering upon the threshold of middle age with an enthusiasm fixed and deepened by every change; but I did not think so the day to which I shall defer my particular remembrances—the day I had left Germany for ever—except in dreams. There were other things I might have left behind, that now I carried to my home; things themselves all dreams, yet containing in their reminiscences the symbols of my every reality. Eternity alone could contain the substance of those shadows—that shore we deem itself a shadow, alone contains the resolution into glory of all our longings, into peace of all our pain.

Such feelings, engendered by loneliness, took me by the very hand and led me forwards that dreary December evening when I landed in England last, having obtained all that was absolutely necessary to be made my own abroad.

I have not tormented my reader or two with the most in-

significant mention of myself between this evening and a time some years before; it would have been impracticable, or, if practicable, impertinent, as I lived those after-years entirely within and to myself. The sudden desertion which had stricken Cecilia of her hero lord, and that suspension of his presence which ensued, had no more power upon me than to call out what was, indeed, demanded of me under such circumstances—all the persistency of my nature. And if even there had been a complete and actual surrender of all her privileges by professors and pupils, I should have been the last to be found there; and I think that I should have played to the very empty halls until ruin hungered for them, and we had fallen together. As it happened, however, my solitude was more actual than any I could have provided for myself; my spirit retreated, and to music alone remained either master or slave.

The very representative of music was no longer such to me; for when we came together after that fatal midsummer no sign was left of Anastase—"a new king had arisen in Egypt, who knew not Joseph." To him I ought, perhaps, to confess that I owed a good deal, but I cannot believe it; I am fain to think I should have done as well alone; but there was that in the association and habitude of the place, that in the knowledge of being still under the superintendence, however formal and abstracted, of its head, that I could not, and would not, have flung up the chances of its academical career.

It was, however, no effort to disengage myself from the spot, for any notion of the presence of him I best loved was, alas! now, and had been long, entirely dissociated from it. Not one smile from those fair lips—not one ray from those awful eyes, had sunned the countenances of the ever-studious throng. A monastery could not have been more secluded from the incarnate presence of the Deity, than were we in that quiet institution from its distant director.

Let it not be imagined, at the same time, that we could have existed in ignorance of that influence which was streaming—an "eastern star"—through the country that contained him as a light of life; which, in the few fleeting years of my boyhood had garnered such illustrious immortality for one scarcely past his own first youth. But, in leaving Germany, I was leaving neither the name nor the fame of Seraphael, except to meet them again, where they were dearer yet and brighter than in their cradle-land.

None could estimate—and, young as I yet was, I well knew it—the proportion of the renown his early works had gained in this strange country. The noblest attribute of race—the irresistible conception of the power of race—had scarcely then received a remote encouragement, though physiologists abounded; but, like our artists, they lacked an ideal; or, like our politicians, “a man.”

Still, whether people* knew it or not, they insensibly worshipped the perfect beauty whose development was itself music, and whose organisation, matchless and sublimated, was but the purest type of that human nature on which the Divine One placed his signet, and which he instituted by sharing, the nearest to his own. Those who did know it, denied it in the face of their national conviction, because it was so hard to allow that to be a special privilege in which they can bear no earthly part. For all the races of the earth cannot tread down one step of that race, nor diminish in each millennium its spiritual approximation to an everlasting endurance. Or, perhaps, to do them justice, the very conviction was as dark to them as that of death, which all must hold, and so few care to remind themselves of. At all events, it was yet a whisper—and a whisper not so universally wafted as whispers in general are—that Seraphael was of unperverted Hebrew ancestry, both recognisant of the fact, and auspicious in its entertainment.

Many things affected me as changes when I landed at London Bridge, for I had not been at home for three whole years; and was not prepared to meet such changes, though aware of many in myself.

I cannot allude to any now, except the railway, which was the first I had seen, and whose line to our very town, almost to our very house, had been not six months completed. I shall never forget the effect, nor has it ever left me when I travel; I cannot find it monotonous, nor anything but marvel. It was certainly evening when I entered the stupendous terminus, and nothing could have so adapted itself to the architecture as the black-grey gloom, lamp-strung, streaming with gas-jets.

Such gloom breathed deadly cold, presaging the white storm or the icing wind, and it was the long drear line itself that drew my spirit forth, as itself lonely to bask in loneliness—such weird, wild insecurity seemed hovering upon the darkened distance—such a dream of hopeless achievement seemed the space to be overpassed that awful evening. As I walked

along the carriage-line I felt this, although the engine-fire glowed furiously, and it spit out sparks in bravery; but the murmur of exhaustless power prevented my feeling in full force what that power must really be.

It was not until we rolled away, and left the lamps in their ruddy sea behind us—had lost ourselves far out in the dark country; had begun to rush into the very arms of night—that I could even bear to remember how little people had told me of what steam-travelling by land would prove in my experience. It seemed to me as if I, too, ought to have changed, and to carry wings; the spirit pined for an enfranchisement of its own as peculiar, and recalled all painfully that its pinings were in vain.

A thousand chapters have been expended upon the delights of return to home, and a thousand more will probably insure for themselves laudable publicity. I should be an all-ungrateful wretch if I refused my single *Ave* at that olden shrine. I cannot quite forget, either, that none of my wildest recollections out-dazzled its near brightness as I approached; the poetic isolation of my late life, precious as it was in itself, and inseparable from my choicest appreciation, seeming but to enhance the genial sweetness of the reality in my reception.

Long before I arrived in that familiar parlour, a presence awaited me which had ever appeared to stand between my actual and my ideal world—it was that of my brother and earliest friend, dear Lenhart Davy, who had walked out into the winter night expressly and entirely to meet me; and who was so completely unaged, unchanged, and unalloyed, that I could but wonder at the freshness of the life within him, until I remembered the fountains where it fed. He was as bright, as earnest, as in the days of my infant faith; but there was little to be said until we arrived at home.

Cold as was the season, and peculiarly susceptible as our family has ever been to cold, the street-door positively stood ajar! and hiding behind it was Margareth, oblivious of rheumatism and frost, to receive her nursling. When she had pronounced upon my growth her enchanted eulogy, that I was taller than ever, and more like myself, I was dragged into the parlour by Davy, and found them all; the bloom of the fire-light restoring their faces exactly as I had left them. My mother, as I told her, looked younger than myself, which might easily be the case, as I believe I was born grown up; and Clo was very handsome in her fashion, wearing the old pictorial raiment. My sister Lydia had lately received pre-

ferment, and introduced me on the instant to her prospects, a gentlemanly individual upon the sofa who had not even concluded his college career, but was in full tilt for high mathematical honours at that which I have heard called Oxford's rival, but upon whose merit as a residence and Academe celestial I am not competent to sit in judgment.

These worthies dismissed, I was at liberty to spend myself upon the most precious of the party. They were Millicent and her baby, which last I had never seen; a lady of eighteen months, kept thus late out of her cradle that she, too, might greet her uncle. She was a delicious child—I have never found her equal—and had that indescribable rarity of appearance which belongs, or we imagine it to belong, to an only one. Carlotta—so they had christened her after unworthy me—was already calling upon my name, to the solemn ecstasy of Davy and his wife's less sustained gratification.

I have never really seen such a sight as that sister and brother of mine, with that only child of theirs. When we drew to the table, gloriously spread for supper, and my mother in one of her old-fashioned agonies implored for Carlotta to be taken upstairs, Davy, perfectly heedless, brought her along with him to his chair, placed on his knee and fed her, fostered her till she fell asleep and tumbled against his shoulder, when he opened his coat-breast for her and just let her sleep on—calling no attention to her beauties in so many words, certainly, but paying very little attention to anything else; and at last, when we all retired, carrying her away with him upstairs, where I heard him walking up and down his room, with a hushing footstep, long after I had entered mine.

It was not until the next morning that I was made fully aware of Davy's position. After breakfast, as soon as the sun was high enough to prepare the frosty atmosphere for the reception of the baby, I returned with Millicent and himself to their own home. I had been witness to certain improvements in that little droll house, but a great deal more had been done since my last visit.

For example, there was a room downstairs, built out, for the books, which had accumulated too many; and over this room had Davy designed a very sweet greenhouse, to be approached from the parlour itself. The same order overlaid everything; the same perfume of cleanliness permeated every corner; and it was just as well this was the case, so jammed and choked up with all sorts of treasures and curiosities were the little landing-

place, the tiny drawing-room, the very bedroom and *a half*, as Davy called my own little closet, with the little carven bed's-head. Everywhere his shadow, gliding and smiling silently, though at the proper time she had plenty to say too, came Millicent after him; nor was the baby ever far behind; for at the utmost distance might be glimpsed a nest of basket-work, lined with blush-colour, placed on a chair or two among the geraniums and myrtles, and in that basket the baby lay; while her mamma, who only kept one servant, made various useful and ornamental progresses through the house.

While Davy was at home, however, Carlotta was never out of his arms, or, at least, off his lap; she had learned to lie quite quiescently across his knees while he wrote or read, making no more disturbance than a dove would have done. I believe he was half-jealous, because, when I took her, she did not cry; but began to put her fingers into my eyes, and to carry my own fingers to her mouth. This morning we had her between us when we began to talk, and it was with his eyes upon her that Davy first said—

“Well, Charles, you have told me nothing of your plans yet; I suppose they are hardly formed.”

“Oh, yes, quite formed—at least as formed as they can be without your sanction. You know what you wrote to me about—your last letter?”

“You received that extemporaneous extravaganza, then, Charles? which I afterwards desired I had burned.”

“I take that as especially unkind on your part, as I could not but enter with the most eager interest into every line.”

“Not unkind, though I own it was a little cowardly. I felt rather awed in submitting my ideas to you, when you were at the very midst of music in its most perfect exposition.”

“Oh! I did not quite discover that, Lenhart. There are imperfections everywhere, and will be, in such a mixed multitude as of those who press into the service of what is altogether perfect.”

“The old story, Charlie.”

“Rather the new one. I find it every day placed before me in a stronger light; but it has not long held, even with me. How very little we can do, even at the utmost, and how very hard we must labour even to do that little!”

“I am thankful to hear you say so, Charles, coming fresh from the severities of study; but we are some few of us in the same mind.”

"Then let us hold together—and this brings me to my purpose. I am not going to settle in London, Lenhart; that is a mistake of yours. I will never leave you while I can be of any use."

"Leave me, Charlie? Ah! would that I could cherish the possibility of your remaining here! But, with your power and your promise of success, who would not blame those who should prevent your appearance in London?"

"I will never make my appearance anywhere, my dearest brother, at least, not as you intend. I could have no objection to play anywhere if I were wanted, and if any one cared to hear me; but I will never give up the actual hold I have on this place. As much may be done here as anywhere else, and more, I am certain, than in London. There is more room here; less strain and stress—and, once more, I will not leave you."

"But how, my Charlie, in what sense?"

"I will work along with you, and for you, while I work for myself. I am young, very young, and, I dare say, very presumptuous in believing myself equal to the task; but I should wish, besides being resident professor, to devote myself especially to the organisation of that band of which you wrote, and which, in your letter, you gave me to understand it is your desire to amalgamate with your class. You do not see, Lenhart, that, young as I am, nothing could give me a position like this, and that, if I fail, I can but return to a less ambitious course."

"There is no course, Charles, that I do not consider you equal to; but I cannot reconcile it with my conscience to bind you to a service so signal for my own sake; it is a mere sketch of a Spanish castle I had reared in an idle hour."

"We will raise a sure fame on solid foundations, Lenhart, and I do not care about fame for its own sake. After all, you cannot, with your musical eclecticism, prefer me to become mixed up in the horrible struggle for precedence which, in London, degrades the very nature of art and renders its pursuit a misnomer."

"You have not given up one of your old prejudices, Charles."

"No, Davy. I feel we can do more acting together than either separately, for the cause we love best and desire to serve. You know me well, and that, whatever I have learned in my life abroad, no taste is so dear to me as yours—no judgment I should follow to the death so gladly. Besides, all the rest, which is made up of a good deal more than one can say, I

could never consent, as an instrumentalist, and as holding that instrument to be part of myself, to infect my style with whims and fashions which alone would render it generally acceptable. I *must* reserve what I musically believe as my musical expression, and nothing can satisfy me in that respect but the development of the orchestra."

"Poor orchestra! it is a very germ, a winter-seed at present, my ever-sanguine Charlie."

"I am not sanguine; on the contrary, I am disposed to suspect treachery everywhere, even in myself, and certainly in you, if you would have me go to London, take fashionable lodgings, and starve myself on popular precedents, among which that most magnificent one of lionising musical professors. No, I could not bear that, and no one would care a whit for my playing as I *feel*. I should be starved out-and-out. If you can initiate me a little yourself into your proceedings, I think I shall be able to persuade you that I ought to be only where my impulse directs me to remain."

Davy at this juncture deprived me of the baby, who had been munching my finger all the time we talked, and when he had placed her in her nest—a portent of vast significance—he enlightened me indeed to the full; and we informed Millicent when she came upstairs, for nothing could be done without asking her accord. It was greatly to my satisfaction that she entirely agreed with me, and a great relief to Davy, who, in the plenitude of his delicate pride, could hardly bear the thought of suggesting anything to anybody, lest his suggestion should unsteady any fixed idea of their own. Millicent cordially asserted that she felt there was a more interesting sphere about them than she could imagine to exist anywhere else; and perhaps she was right, for no one could sufficiently laud the extirpation of ancient prejudices by Davy's firm voice and ardent heart. I could not possibly calculate at that moment the force and extent of his singular efforts, and their still more unwonted effects in so short a time made manifest. I heard of these from Millicent, who could talk of nothing else, to me at least, after Davy, ever anxious, had left us for his morning's lessons, which occupied him in private, though not much more than formerly, as his peculiar attention and nearly his whole time were devoted more determinately than ever to the instruction and elevation of the vocal institution he had organised.

"No one can tell, Charles," said Millicent, among other things, "how heroically and patiently he has worked, rejecting

all but the barest remuneration, to bring all forward as he has succeeded in doing, and has nobly done. You will say so when you hear—and you must hear to-morrow evening.”

“I shall indeed feel strange, Millicent,” I replied, “to sit at his feet once more, and to feel again all that went through me in the days when I learned of him alone. But I am very curious about another friend of mine. I suppose you can tell me just as well as he.”

“About Miss Benette, Charles?”

“Yes, and also little Laura.”

“I know nothing; we know nothing of her or what she has been doing; but you must have heard of Clara?”

“Not a word. I have been very quiet, I assure you.”

“So much the better for you, Charles. But she has not lost your good opinion?”

“She would have that wherever she went.”

“I believe it. My husband has, of course, never lost sight of her; yet it was not until the other day, and quite by accident, that we heard of all she has become. A very old Italian stager, Stelli by name, called on Lenhart the other day at the class, and, after hearing several of the pieces, asked him whether his pupil, Miss Benette, had not belonged to it once on a time. He said yes: and finding that the signor was acquainted with her, brought him home to dinner; and we were told a great deal that it is very difficult to tell, even to you, Charles. She must, however, be exactly what you always imagined.”

“I should not only imagine, but expect, she will remain unaltered. I do not believe such eyes could change, or the owner of such eyes.”

“He says just so; he says that she is an angel; he continued to call her *angela*, *angela*, and could call her nothing else.”

“Is she singing in Italy just now?”

“It is just that we asked him. You know she went to Italy for study, and no one heard a word about her; she did not omit to write, but never mentioned what she was doing. Only the third year she sent us news of her *début*. This was but last May. The news was in a paper, not in her letter. In her letter she only spoke of ourselves, and sent us a present for baby—such a piece of work, Charles, as you never saw. I thought she would have quite given up work by that time. The letter was a simple, exquisite expression of regard for her old master; and when Lenhart answered it, she wrote again. *This* letter contained the most delicate intimation of her prosperous views.

She was entirely engaged at that time; but told us she trusted to come to England an early month next year, for she says she finds, having been to Italy, she loves England best."

"That is rather what I should have expected. She had not an Italian touch about her; she would weary there."

"I should scarcely think so, Charles, for Stelli described her beauty as something rose-like and healthful; 'fresher than your infant there,' he said, pointing to baby; and from her style of singing grand and sacred airs, she has been fancifully named, and is called everywhere, 'La Benetta Benedetta.'"

"That strikes home to me very pleasantly, Millicent. She had something blessed and infantine in her very look. I admire that soubriquet, but those usually bestowed by the populace are most unmeaning: her own name, however, suits her best; it is limpid like the light in her eyes. There is no word so apt as 'clear' for the expression of her soul. And what, Millicent, of her voice and style?"

"Something wonderful, no doubt, Charles, if she obtained an engagement in the midst of such an operative pressure as there was this year. I hope she will do something for England too. We have not so many like her that we can afford to lose her altogether."

"I know of not one, Millicent; and shall, if it be my good fortune to see her, persuade her not to desert us; but Lenhart will have more chance."

"La Benetta Benedetta!" I could not forget it; it haunted me like the words of some chosen song: I was ever singing it in my mind; it seemed the most fitting, and the only not irreverent homage with which one could have strewed the letters of her name—a most successful hieroglyph. Nor the less was I reminded of her when, on the following evening, I accompanied my sister, who for once had allowed Clo to take charge of her baby, to the place, now so altered since I left it, where the vocal family united. We entered at the same door—we approached the same room; but none could again have known it unless, as in my case, he could have pointed out the exact spot on which he had been accustomed to sit. The roof was raised, the rafters were stained that favourite sylvan tint of Davy's—the windows lightly pencilled with it upon their ground-glass arches—the walls painted the softest shade of grey, harmonising perfectly with the purple-crimson tone of the cloth that covered seats and platform. Alas! as I surveyed that platform, I felt with Davy how much room there was for increased and novel yet

necessary organism, in the perfectibility of the system; for on that glowing void outspread, where his slight, dark form, and white face and *glancing* hands alone shone out, I could but dream of beholding the whole array in clustering companionship, of those mystic shapes that suggest to us, in their varied yet according forms, the sounds that creep, that wind, that pierce, that electrify, through parchment, or brass, or string.

In a word, they wanted a band very much. It would not have signified whether they had one or not, had the class continued in its primitive position, and in which its enemies would have desired it to remain—an unprogressive mediocrity. But as it is the nature of true art to be progressive ever, it is just as ignorant to expect shortcomings of a true artist, as it would be vain to look for ideal success amongst the leaders of musical taste, neither endowed with aspiration nor volition. Now, to hear those voices rise, prolong themselves, lean in uncorrupted tone upon the calm motet, or rest in unagitated simplicity over a pause of Ravenscroft's old heavenly verses—made one almost leap to reduce such a host to the service of an appropriate band, and to institute orchestral worship there. I could but remind myself of certain great works, paradises of musical creation from whose rightful interpretation we are debarred, either by the inconsistency with the chosen band of the selected chorus, or by the inequality of the band itself. It struck me that a perfect dream might here be realised in full perfection should my own capabilities at least keep pace with the demand upon them—were I permitted to take my part in Davy's plan as we had treated of it to each other. I told him, as we walked home together, a little of my mind; he was in as bright spirits as at his earliest manhood; it was a favourable moment, and in the keen December moonlight we made a vow to stand by each other then and ever.

Delightful as was the task, and responsive to my inmost resolutions, the final result I scarcely dared anticipate; it was no more easy at first than to trace the source of such a river as the Nile. Many difficulties darkened the way before me; and my own musical knowledge seemed but as a light flung immediately out of my own soul, making the narrow circle of a radiance for my feet that was unavailable for any others. My position as Davy's brother-in-law gave me a certain hold upon my pupils; but no one can imagine what suffering they weatlessly imposed upon me. The number I began with, receiving each singly, not at my own home, but in a hired room, was not

more than eight, amateurs and neophytes, either; the amateurs esteeming themselves no less than amateurs, and something more; the neophytes chiefly connections of the choral force, and of an individual stubbornness not altogether to be appreciated at an early period. I could laugh to remember myself those awful mornings when, after a breakfast at home which I could not have touched had it been less delicately prepared, I used to repair to that room of mine, and await the advent of those gentlemen, all older than myself except one, and he the most presto in pretensions of the set. The room was at the back and top of a house; and over the swinging window-blind I could discern a rush now and then of a deep dark smoke; and a wail, as of a demon sorely tried, would shrill along my nerves as the train dashed by. The trains were my chief support during the predominance of my ordeal, they superinduced a sensation that was neither of music nor of stolidity.

After a month or two, however, dating from the first week of February, when, together with the outpeering of the first snow-drop from the frost, I assumed my dignities, I discovered that I had gained a certain standing, owing to the fact of my being aware what I was about, and always attending to the matter in hand. Of my senior pupils, one was immensely conversable, so conversable that, until he had disgorged himself of a certain quantity of chat, it was impossible to induce him to take up his bow; another, contemplative, so contemplative, that I always had to unpack his instrument for him, and to send it after him when he was gone, in a general way; a third, so deficient in natural musicality that he did not like my playing! and soon put up for a vacant oboe in the band of the local theatre, and left me in the lurch. But desperately irate with them as I was, and almost disgusted with my petty efforts, I made no show of either to Davy, nor did they affect my intentions, nor stagger my fixed assurance. All my experiences were hoarded and husbanded by me to such purpose on my own account, that I advanced myself in exact proportion to the calm *statu quo* in which remained at present my orchestral nucleus. My patience was rewarded, however, before I could have dared to hope, by a steady increase of patronage during April and May; in fact I had so much to do in the eight weeks of those two months that my mother declared I was working too hard, and projected a trip for me somewhere. Bless her ever benignant heart! she always held that everybody, no matter who, and no matter what they had to do, should recreate during three months out

of every twelve! How my family, all celebrated as they were for nerves of salient self-assertion, endured my home-necessary practice, I cannot divine; but they one and all made light of it, even declaring they scarcely heard that all-penetrating sound distilled down the staircase and through closed parlour doors. But I was obliged to keep in my own hand most vigorously, and sustained myself by the hope that I should one day lead off my dependants in the region now made sacred by voice and verse alone. It was my habit to give no lessons after dinner, but to pursue my own studies, sadly deficient as I was in too many respects, in the long afternoons of spring, and to walk in the lengthening evenings, more delicious in my remembrance than any of my boyish treasure-times. On class nights I would walk to Davy's, find him in a paroxysm of anxiety just gone off, leaving Millicent to bemoan his want of appetite, and to devise elegant but inexpensive suppers. I would have one good-night game with my soft-lipped niece—watch her mamma unswathe the cambric from her rosy limbs—see the white lids drop their lashes over her blue eyes' sleepfulness—listen to the breath that arose like the pulses of a flower to the air—feel her sweetness make me almost sad, and creep downstairs most noiselessly. Millicent would follow me to fetch her work-basket from the little conservatory—would talk a moment before she returned upstairs to work by the cradle-side—would steal with me to the door, look up to the stars or the moon a moment, and heave a sigh, a sigh as from happiness too large for heart to hold; and I, having picked my path around the narrow gravel, smelling the fresh mould in the darkness, having reached the gate, would just glance round to sign adieu, and not till then would she withdraw into the warm little hall, and close the door. Then, off I was to the class, to see the windows a-glow from the street—to hear the choral glory greeting me in sounds like chastened organ-tones—to mount, unquestioned, into the room, to find the crimsoned seats all full, the crimson platform bare, save of that quick, dark form, and those gleaming hands. I sit down behind, and bask luxuriously in that which to me is precious as the “sunshine to the bee;” or I come down stoopingly a few steps, and, taking the edge of a bench, where genial faces smile for me, I peep over the sheet of the pale mechanic or rejoicing weaver, whose visage is drawn out of its dread fatigue as by a celestial galvanism, and join in the psalm, or mix my spirit in the soaring antiphon. Davy meets me afterwards—we wait until everybody has

passed out—we pack away the books—we turn down the gas; or, at least, a gentleman does, who appears to think it an essential part of music that a supreme bustle should precede and follow its celebrations; and who, locking the door after we attain the street, tenders Davy the key in a perfect agony of courteous patronage, and bows almost unto the earth. I accompany my brother home, and Millicent and he and I sup together, the happiest trio in the town. On other nights I sup at home, and after my walk, as I come in earlier, and after I have given reports of Millicent, and her spouse, and the baby; also, whether it has been out this day (my mother having a righteous prejudice against certain winds) I sometimes play to them such moving melodies as I fancy will touch them, but not too deeply; and indulge in the lighter moods that music does not deny, even to the uninitiated—often trifling with my memory of old times as they begin to seem to me; and, alas! have seemed many years already, though I am young, so young that I scarcely know yet how young I am.

CHAPTER XLI

I WAS in the most contented frame of mind that can be conceived of, until the very May month of the year I speak of, when my sensations, as usual, began to be peculiar. I don't think anybody can love summer better than I do—can more approvedly languish out by heavy-shaded stream in an atmosphere all roses, the summer noons—can easier spend in *insomnie* the lustrous moony nights.

But May does something to me of which I am not aware during June and July, or at the first delicate spring-time. When the laburnums rain their gold, and the lilacs toss broad-bloomed their grape-like clusters—when the leaves full swelling are yet all veined with light; I cannot very well work hard, and would rather slave the livelong eleven months beside, to have that month a holiday. So it happened now; and though I had no absolute right to leave my pupils, and desert the first stones of my musical masonry just laid and smoothed, I was obliged to think that if I were to have a holiday at all, I had better take it then. But I had not decided until I received a double intimation, one from Davy and one from the county newspaper, which last never chronicled events that stirred in

London unless they stirred beyond it. My joyous brother brought me the letter, and the paper was upon our table the same morning when I came down to breakfast.

"See here, Charles," said Clo, who, sitting in her own corner, over her own book, was unwontedly excited; "here is a piece of news for you, and my mother found it first!"

I read, in a castaway paragraph enough, that the Chevalier Seraphael, the pianist and composer, was to pay a visit to England this very summer; though to remain in strict seclusion, he would not be inaccessible to professors. He brought with him, I learned, "the fruits of several years' solitary travel, no doubt worthy of his genius and peculiar industry."

Extremely to the purpose were these expressions, for they told me all I wanted to know: that he was alive, must be himself again, and had been writing for those who loved him—for men and angels. Now, for my letter. I had held it without opening it, for I chose to do so when alone, and waited until after breakfast. It was a choice little supplement to that choicest of all invites for my spirit and heart—a note on foreign paper—the graceful, firm character of the writing found no difficulty to stand out clear and black from that milken-water hue and spongy texture. It was from Clara, a simple form that a child might have dictated, yet containing certain business reports for Davy, direct as from one who could master even business.

She was coming definitely to England, not either for any purposes save those all worthy of herself; she had accepted, after much consideration, a London engagement for the season; and, said she—

"I only have my fears lest I should do less than I ought for what I love best; it is so difficult to do what is right by music in these times, when it is fashionable to seem to like it. You will give me a little of your advice, dear Sir, if I need it, as perhaps I may; but I hope not, because I have troubled you too much already. I trust your little daughter is growing like you to please her mother, and like her mother to please you. I shall be delighted to see it when I come to London, if you can allow me to do so."

The style of this end of a letter both amused and absorbed me; it was Clara's very idiosyncrasy. I could but think, Is it possible that she has not altered more than her style of expressing herself has done? I must go and see.

Davy received my ravings with due compassion and more

indulgence than I had dared to hope. The suspension of my duties, leaving our orchestra in limbo still longer, disconcerted him a little, but he was the first to say I must surely go to London. The only thing to be discovered was when to go, so as not to frustrate either one of my designs or the other, and I declared he must, to that end, address Clara on the very subject.

He did so, and in a fortnight there came the coolest note to say she would be in London the next day, and that she had heard the great musician would arrive before the end of the month. I only marvelled whether, in all the course of his wanderings, Clara and the Chevalier had met; but still I thought and prophesied not. I was really reluctant to leave Davy with his hands and head full, that I might saunter with my own in kid gloves, and swarming with May fancies; but for once my selfishness—or something higher whose mortal frame is selfishness—impelled me. I found myself in the train at the end of the next week, carrying Clara's address in my memorandum book, and my violin-case in the carriage along with me.

It was early afternoon, and exquisitely splendid weather when I arrived in London. In London, however, I had little to do just then, as the address of the house to which I was bound was rather out of London—above the smoke—beyond the stir—at the very first plunge into the surrounding country that lingers yet as a dream upon her day-reality, with which dreams suit not ill, and from which they seldom part. I love the heart of London, in whose awful deeps reflect the mysterious unfathomable of every secret, and where the homeless are best at home—where the home-bred fear not to wander, assured of sweet return; but I do not love its immediate precincts, the rude waking stage between that profundity and the conserved, untainted sylvan vision, that, once overpast it, dawns upon us.

Dashing as abruptly as possible, and by the nearest way through all the brick wilderness outward, I reached in no long weary time, and by no long weary journey, though on foot, a quiet road, which by a continuous but gentle rise carried me to the clustered houses, neither quite hamlet nor altogether village, where Miss Benette had hidden her heart among the leaves.

Cool and shady was the side I took, though the sunshine whitened the highway, and every summer promise beamed

from the soft sky's azure, the green earth's bloom. The painted gates I met at intervals, or the iron-wreathed portals, guarded dim walks, through whose perspective villas glistened, all beautiful as they were discerned afar in their frames of tossing creepers, with gay verandahs or flashing green-houses. But the wall I followed gave me not a transient glimpse of gardens inwards; so thickly blazed the laburnums and the paler flames of the rich acacia, not to speak of hedges all sweetbriar, matted into one embrace with double-blossomed hawthorn. I passed garden after garden and gate after gate, seeing no one; for the great charm of those regions consists in the extreme privacy of every habitation—privacy which the most exclusive nobleman might envy, and never excel in his wilderness parks or shrubberies; and when at length I attained the summit of the elevation where two roads met and shut in a sweep of actual country, and I came to the end of the houses, I began to look about for some one to direct me; then, turning the corner, I came in turning upon what I had been seeking, without having really sought it by any effort.

The turn in the road I speak of went tapering off between hedgerows; and meadow-lands, as yet unencroached upon, swept within them as far as I could see. But just where I stood, a cottage, older than any of the villas, and framed in shade more ancient than the light groves I left behind me, peeped from the golden and purple May-trees across a moss-green lawn—a perfect picture in its silence, and a very paradise of fragrance. It was built of wood, and had its roof-hung windows and drooping eaves protected by a spreading chestnut-tree, whose great green fans beat coolness against every lattice, and whose blossoms had kindled their rose-white tapers at the sun. The garden was so full of flowers that one could scarcely bear the sweetness, except that the cool chestnut shadow dashed the breeze with freshness as it swept the heavy foliage, and sank upon the chequered grass to a swoon. I was not long lost in contemplating the niche my saint had chosen, for I could have expected nothing fitter; but I was at some loss to enter, for the reminiscences of my childhood burdened me, and I dreaded lest I should be deprived of anything I now held stored within me, by a novel shock of being. I need not have feared.

After waiting till I was ashamed, I opened the tiny gate and walked across the grass, still soft with the mowing of the morning, to the front door, where I pulled a little bell-handle

half smothered in the wreaths of monthly roses that were quivering and fluttering like pink doves about the door and lower windows. This was as it should be, the very door-bell dressed with flowers; but more as it should be, it was that Thoné opened the door. I was almost ready to disappear again, but that her manner was the most reassuring to troublesome nerves. She did not appear to have any idea who I was, nor did she even stare when I presented my card, but like some strange bronze escaped from its pedestal, and attired in muslin, she conducted me onwards down a little low hall, half filled with the brightest plants, into a double parlour, whose folding-doors were closed, and whose diamond-paned back-window looked out far, and very far, into the country.

Hearing not a voice in the next room, nor any rustle, nor even a soft foot hastily cross the beamed ceiling overhead, I dared look about me for a moment—hid my hat in confusion under a chair—saw that the round table had a bowl of flowers in its centre—caught sight of my face in the intensely polished glass-door of a small closed book-case—and, as if detected in some act, walked away to the window.

I could not have done a better thing to prepare myself for any fresh excitement; I was ready in an instant to weep with joy at the beauty that flooded my spirit. Over and beyond the garden I gazed; it did not detain my eye—I passed its tree-tops, all apple-bloom and lilac, and its sudden bursts of grass where the tree-tops parted. I looked out to the country, an undulating country, a sea of green, flushed here and there with a bloomy level, or a breeze upon the crimson clover—odorous bean-fields quivered, and their scent was floating everywhere; it drowned the very garden sweetness, and blended in with waftures of unknown fragrance, all wild essences shed from woodbines, from dog-roses, and the new-cut grass, or plummy meadow-sweet, by the waters of rills flowing up into the distance, silver in the sun-light. Soft hills against the heaven swept over visionary valleys—the sunshine lay white and warm upon glistening summer seas and picture cottages—over all spread the purple, melting, brooding sky, transparent on every leaf and blossom, shining upon those tender sloping hills with an amethyst haze of light, not shade.

As I stood, the things that seemed had never been, and the things that had been grew dilated and indefinitely bright—the soft thrall of the suspense that bound me intertwining itself with mine “electric chain,” as that May-dream mixed itself

with all my music, veiling it as moonlight, the colours of the flowers, or as music itself veils passion.

I waited quite half an hour, and had lost myself completely, feeling as if no change could come, when, without a sound, some one entered behind me. I knew it by the light that burst through the folding-door, which had, however, again closed when I turned, for the tread was so silent I might otherwise have gone dreaming on. Clara stood before me; so little altered that I could have imagined that she had been put away in a trance when I left her last, and but this instant was restored to me.

She was not more womanly, nor less child-like; and for her being an actress, it seemed a thing impossible. I could but stand and gaze; nor did she seem surprised, nor did her eyes droop, nor her fair cheek mantle; through the untrembling lashes I caught the crystal light as she opposed me, still waiting for me to speak.

I was heartily ashamed at last, and resolved to make her welcome as she maintained that strange regard. I put out my hand, and in an instant she greeted me; the infantine smile shone suddenly that had soothed me so long ago.

"I am very glad to see you, Miss Benette. It was very kind of you to let me come."

"By no means," she replied, with the slightest possible Italian softening of her accent. "I am very much obliged to you, and I am very pleased also. Please sit down, Sir, for you have been standing, I am afraid, a long time. I was out at first, and since I returned I made haste, but still, I fear, I have kept you waiting."

"I could have waited all day, Miss Benette, to see such a window as this! How did you manage to put your foot into such a nest?"

"It is a very sweet little place, and the country is most beautiful. I don't know what they mean by its being too near London. I must be near London, and yet I could not exactly live in it, for it makes me idle."

"How very strange, it has the same effect upon me—that is to say, I always dream in those streets, and lose half my purpose. Still it must be almost a temptation to indulge a certain kind of idleness here; in such a garden as that, for example, one could pass all one's time."

"I do pass half my time in the garden, and yet I do not think it is too much, for it makes me well, and I cannot work

when I am not well, I was always unfortunate in that respect."

"How do you think I look, by the by, Miss Benette? Am I very much changed? It is, perhaps, however, not a safe question."

"Quite safe, Sir. You have grown more and more like your inseparable companion—you always had a look of it, and now it takes the place of all other expression."

"I don't know whether that is complimentary or not, you see, for I never heard your opinion in old times. I was a very silly boy then, and not quite so well aware of what I owed to you as I may be now."

"I do not feel that you owe anything to anybody, Mr. Auchester; for you would have gone to your own desires as resolutely through peril as through pleasure; at all events, if you are still as modest as you were, it is a great blessing now you have become a soul which bears so great a part. If I must speak truth, however, about your looks, you seem as delicate as you used to be, and I do not suppose you could be anything else. You have not altered except to have grown up."

"And you, if I may say so, have not altered in growing up."

Nor had she. She had not gained an inch in height—she could never have worn that black silk frock those years—yet the folds, so grave and costly, still shielded her gentle breast to meet the snow-soft ruffle that fringed her throat; nor had she ornament upon her—neither bracelet nor ring upon the dimpled hands, the delicate wrists. Though her silken hair had lengthened into wreaths upon wreaths behind, she still preserved those baby-curls upon her temples, nor had a shade more majesty gathered to her brow; the regal innocence was throned there, and looked forth from her eyes as from a shrine, but it was evident that there was nothing about her from head to foot on which she piqued herself—a rare shortcoming of feminine maturity. The only perceptible difference in the face was when she spoke or smiled, and then the change, the deepened sweetness, can be no more given to description than the notion of music to the destitute ear. It was something of a reserve too inward to be approached, and too subtle to subdue its own influence; like perfume from unseen flowers, diffusing itself when the wind awakens, while we know neither whence the windy fragrance comes nor whither it flows.

"Is it possible, Miss Benette," I continued—for I forced myself absolutely to speak, I should so infinitely have pre-

ferred to watch her silently—"that you can have passed through so much since I saw you?"

"No, I have lived a very quiet life; it is you who have lived in all the stir until you fancy there is not any calm at all."

"I should have certainly found calm here. But you, I thought, and indeed I know, have had every kind of excitement ready made to your hand, and only waiting for you to touch the springs."

"I have had no excitement till I came here."

"None? Why who could have had more, and who could have borne the same so bravely? We have heard of you here, and it must have been a transcending tempest for the shock to echo so far."

"I do not call singing in theatres, and acting, excitement. I always felt cool and collected in them; for I knew they were not real, and that I should get through them soon, and very glad should I be; so I was patient and did my best. You look at me shocked: I knew I should shock you after all our talk."

"Oh, fie! Miss Benette, to talk so, then, and to shock yourself as you must, if you are faithless."

"Poor I, faithless! well, I am not important enough for it to signify. And yet I should like to tell you what I mean, because you were always kind to me, and I should not wish you to despise me now. No, Mr. Auchester, I am not faithless; I love music more and more; it is the form of my religion; I dare to call it altogether holy; I am sure, indeed, it must be so, or it would have been trodden long ago into nothing with the evil they have heaped over it to hide it, and the mistake they have made about it. I act and I sing, because that is what I can do best! but my idea of music goes with yours, and therefore I am not excited as I should be, if I were filling up a place such as that which you fill; though I would not leave my own for any consideration, and hope to continue in it. My excitement since I came here, where most ladies would be dull or sick, has arisen from the feeling that I am brought into contact with what is most like music, as I always find solitude, and also because since I came I have been raised higher by several spirits which are lofty in their desires, instead of being dragged through a mass of all opinions as I was abroad. My pleasures here are so great that I feel my soul to be quite young again, and to grow younger; and you cannot fancy what it is to return here after being in London, because you do not go to London, and if you did go to London, you would not do as I do."

She turned to me here, and told me it was her dinner-hour, asking me to remain and dine with her. It was about two o'clock, and I hesitated not to stay; indeed I know not that I could have gone.

We arose together, and I led her forwards. We crossed the hall to a door beyond us; when, removing her little hand from my arm, and laying it on the lock, she looked into my face and smiled.

"You remembered me so well, that I hope you will remember an old friend of mine who is staying here with me."

Before I could reply, or even marvel, she opened the door, and we entered. The little dining-room was lined with warmer hues than the airy drawing-room, but white muslin curtains made sails within the crimson ones, and some person stood within these, lightly screened, and looking out over the blind.

"Laura," said Miss Benette—and she turned with exquisite elegance. Had it not been for her name, which touched my memory, I could not have remembered her—certainly, at least, not then.

Perhaps, when we were seated opposite at table, with nothing between us but a vase of garden flowers, I might have made out her lineaments, but I was called upon by my reminding chivalry to assist the hostess in the dissection of spring chickens and roasted lamb, and there was something besides about that very Laura I did not like to face until she should at least speak and reveal herself, as by the voice one cannot fail to do.

However she spoke not, nor did Clara speak to her, though we two talked a good deal—that is to say, *I* talked, as so it behoved me to behave, and as I wished to see Miss Benette eat. When, at last, all traces of the snowy damask were swept out by a pair of careful hands, and we were left alone with the cut decanters, the early strawberries, and sweet summer oranges, I did determine to look, for fear Miss Lemark should think I did not dare to do so. I was not mistaken, as it happened, in believing her to be quite capable of this construction, as I discovered on regarding her immediately.

Her childish nonchalance had ripened into a hauteur quite alarming, for though she was scarcely my own age, she might have been ten years older. Not that her form was not lithe—lithe as it could be to be endowed with the proper complement of muscles—but for a certain sharpness of outline her countenance would have been languid in repose; her brow retained

its singular breadth, but had not gained in elevation; her eyes were large and lambent, fringed with lashes that swept her cheek, though not darker than her hair, which waved as the willow in slightly-turned tresses to her waist. That waist was so extremely slight that it scarcely looked natural, and yet was entirely so, as was evident from the way she moved in her clothes.

She afforded a curious contrast to Clara in her black silk robe, for she was dressed in muslin of the deepest rose-colour, with an immense skirt, its trimmings lace entirely, the sleeves dropped upon her arms, which were loaded with bracelets of all kinds, while she wore a splendid chain upon her neck. She bore this over effect very well, and would not have become any other, it appeared to me, though there was something faded in her appearance even then—a want of colour in her aspect that demanded of costume the intensest contrasts.

“You have very much grown, Miss Lemark,” I ventured to say, after I had contemplated her to my satisfaction. She had, indeed, grown; she was taller than I.

“So have you, Mr. Auchester.”

“She has grown in many respects, Mr. Auchester, which you cannot imagine,” said Clara, with a winning mischief in her glance.

“I should imagine anything you pleased, I am afraid, Miss Benette, if you inspired me. But I have been thinking it is a very curious thing that we should meet in this way, we three alone, after meeting as we did the first time in our lives.”

“It was rather different then,” exclaimed Laura, all abruptly, “and the difference is, not that we are grown up, but that when we met on the first occasion, we told each other our minds, and now we don’t dare.”

“I am sure I dare,” I retorted.

“No, you would not, no more would Clara; perhaps I might, but it would be of no use.”

“What did I say then that I dare not say now? I am sure I don’t remember.”

“You may remember,” said Clara, smiling; “I think it is hardly fair to make *her* remind you.”

“It is my desert, if I remembered it first. You thought me very vulgar, and you told me as much, though in more polite language.”

“If I thought so then, I may be allowed to have forgotten it

now, Miss Lemark, as I think your friend will grant, when I look at you."

"You do not admire my style, Mr. Auchester; I know you; it is precisely against your taste. Even Clara does not approve it, and you have not half her forbearance, if, indeed, you have any."

"Nobody, Laura dear, would dispute that you can bear more dressing than I can; it does not suit me to wear colours, and you look like a flower in them. Does not that colour suit her well, Mr. Auchester?"

"Indeed I think so, and especially this glorious weather, when the most vivid hues are starting out of every old stone. But Miss Lemark could afford to wear green, a very unusual suitability; it is the hue of her eyes, I think."

Laura had looked down, with that hauteur more fixed than ever now the light of her eyes was lost; she drew in the corners of her mouth, and turned a shade colder, if not paler, in complexion. I could not imagine what she was thinking, till she said, without raising her eyes:—

"You know, Clara, that is not the reason you wear black and I do not. You know that you look well in anything, because nobody looks at anything you happen to wear; besides, there is a reason I could give if I chose."

"There is no other reason that you know of, Laura," she answered, and then she asked me a question on quite another subject.

I was rather anxious to discover whether Laura had fulfilled her destiny as far as we had compassed ours; but I did not find it easy, for she scarcely spoke, and had not lost a certain abstraction in her air that alienated the observer insensibly from her. After dinner Clara rose, and I made some demonstration of going, which she met so that I could not refuse her invitation to remain, at least an hour or two. We all three retired into the little drawing-room; Miss Benette placed me a chair in the open window which I had admired, and herself sat down opposite, easily as a child, and saying, "I will not be rude to-day, as I used to be, in taking out my work whenever you came."

"It suited you very well, however, and I perceive, by your kind present to my little niece, that you have not forgotten that delicate art of yours."

"I had laid it aside, except to work for babies, some time, but it was long since I had a baby to work for; and when Mr. Davy

sent me word in such joy that his little girl was born, I was so rejoiced to be able to make caps and frocks."

"My sister was very much obliged to you on a former occasion, too, Miss Benette."

"Yes, I suppose she was very much obliged that I did not accept Mr. Davy's hand, or would have been, only she did not know it!"

"I did not mean so. I was remembering whose handiwork graced her on her marriage-day."

"Oh! I forgot the veil. I have made several since that one, but not one like that exactly, because I desired that should be unique. You have not told me, Mr. Auchester, anything about Seraphael and his works."

I was so used to call him, and to hear him called, the Chevalier, that at first I started, but was soon in a deep monologue of all that had happened to me in connection with him and his music, only suppressing that which I was in the habit of reserving, even in my own mind, from my conscious self. In the midst of my relation, Laura, apparently uninterested, as she had been seated in a chair with a book in her hands, left the room, and we stayed in our talk and looked at each other at the same instant.

"Why do you look so, Mr. Auchester?" said Clara, half amused, but with a touch of perturbation, too.

"I was expecting to be asked what I thought of that young lady, and you see I was agreeably disappointed, for you are too well-bred to ask."

"No such thing. I thought you would tell me yourself if you liked, but that you might prefer not to do so, because you are not one, Sir, to assume critical airs over a person you have only seen a very few hours."

"You do me more than justice, Miss Benette. But though I despair of ever curing myself of the disposition to criticise, I am not inconvertible. I admire Miss Lemark; she is improved—she is distinguished; a little more, and she would be lady-like."

"I thought lady-like meant less than distinguished. You make it mean more."

"Perhaps I do mean that Miss Lemark is not exactly like yourself, and that when she has lived with you a little longer, she will be indeed all that she can be made."

"That would be foolish to say so; pardon! for she has lived with me two years now, and has most likely taken as much from

me by imitation as she ever will, or by what you perhaps would call sympathy."

"I find, or should fancy I might find to exist, a great dissymmetry between you."

"I suppose *dissymmetry* is one of those nice little German words that are used to express what nobody ought to say. I thought you would not go there for nothing. If your dissymmetry means not to agree in sentiment, I do not know that any two bodies could agree quite in feeling, nor would it be so pleasant as to be alone in some moods. I should be very sorry never to be able to retreat into the cool shade and know that, as I troubled nobody, so nobody could get at me; would not you?"

"Oh, I suppose so, in the sense you mean. But how is it I have not heard of this grace, or muse, taking leave to furl her wings at your nest? I should have thought that Davy would have known."

"Should I tell Mr. Davy what I pay to Thoné for keeping my house in order; or whether I went to church on a Sunday? Laura and I always agreed to live together, but we could not accomplish it until lately; I mean, since I was in Italy. We met then as we said we would. I carried her from Paris, where she was alone, with every one but those who should have befriended her; her father had died, and she was living with Mlle. Margondret; that person I did not like when I was young. If I had known where Laura was, I should have fetched her away before."

I felt for a moment as if I wished that Laura had never been born, but only for one moment. I then resumed—

"Does she not dance in London? She looks just ready for it."

"She has accepted no engagement for this season, at present. I cannot tell what she may do, however. Would you like to see my garden, Mr. Auchester?"

"Indeed, I should very particularly like to see it, above all, if you will condescend to accompany me. There is a great deal more that I cannot help wishing for, Miss Benette, but I scarcely like to dream of asking about it to-night."

"For me to sing? Oh, I will sing for you any time, but I would certainly rather talk to you, at least until the beautiful day begins to go, and it is all bright yet."

She walked before me without her bonnet down the winding garden-steps; the trellised balustrade was lost in rose-wreaths.

We were soon in the rustling air, among the flowers that had not a withered petal, bursting hour by hour.

"It would tease you to carry flowers, Mr. Auchester, or I should be tempted to gather a nosegay for you to take back to London. I cannot leave them alone while they are so fresh, and they quite ask to be gathered. Look at all the buds upon this bush; you could not count them."

"They are Provence roses. What a quantity you have!"

"Thoné chose this cottage for me, because of the number of the flowers. I believe she thinks there is some charm in flowers which will prevent my becoming wicked! If you had been so kind as to bring your violin, I would have filled up the case with roses, and then you would not have had to carry them in your hands."

"But may I not have some, although I did not bring my violin? I never think of anything but violets, though, for strewing that sarcophagus."

"Sarcophagus means tomb, does it not? It is a fine idea of resurrection, when you take out the sleeping music and make it live. I know what you mean about violets; their perfume is like the tones of your instrument, and one can separate it from all other scents in the spring, as those tones from all other tones of the orchestra."

"I have a tender thought for violets, a very sad one, Miss Benette; but still sweet now that what I remember has happened a long while ago."

"That is the best of sorrow, all passes off with time but that which is not bitter, though we can hardly call it sweet. I am grieved I talked of violets, to touch upon any sorrow you may have had to bear; still more grieved that you have had a sorrow, for you are very young."

"I seem to feel, Miss Benette, as if you must know exactly what I have gone through since I saw you, and I am forced to remember it is not the case. I am not sorry you spoke about violets, or rather that I did, because some day I must tell you the whole story of my trouble. I know not why the violet should remind me more than does the beautiful white flower upon that rose-bush over there, for I have in my possession both a white rose that has lived five summers and an everlasting violet, which will never allow me to forget."

"I know, from your look, that it is about some one dying; but why is that so sad? We must all die, Mr. Auchester, and cannot stay after we have been called."

"It may be so, and must indeed; but it was hard to understand, and I cannot now read, why a creature so formed to teach earth all that is most like heaven, should go before any one had dreamed she could possibly be taken; for she had so much to do. You would not wonder at the regret I must ever feel, if you had also known her."

Clara had led me onwards as I spoke, and we stood before that rose-tree; she broke off a fresh rose quietly, and placed it in my hand.

"I am more and more unhappy. It was not because I was not sorry that I said so. Pray tell me about her!"

"She was very young, Miss Benette, only sixteen; and more beautiful than any flower in this garden, or than any star in the sky; for it was a beauty of spirit, of passion, of awful imagination. She was at school with me, and I was taught by her how slightly I had learned all things; she had learned too much, and of what men could not teach her. I never saw such a face—but that was nothing. I never heard such a voice—but neither had it any power, compared with her heavenly genius, and its sway upon the soul. She had written a symphony; you know what it is to do that! She wrote it in three months, and during the slight leisure of a most laborious student life. I was alarmed at her progress, yet there was something about it that made it seem natural. She was ill once, but got over the attack; and the time came when this strange girl was to stand in the light of an orchestra, and command its interpretation. It was a private performance, but I was among the players. She did not carry it through. In the very midst she fell to the ground, overwhelmed by illness. We thought her dead then, but she lived four days."

"And died, Sir? Oh! she did not die?"

"Yes, Miss Benette, she died; but no one then could have wished her to live."

"She suffered so?"

"No, she was only too happy. I did not know what joy could rise to, until I beheld her face with the pain all passed, and saw her smile in dying."

"She must have been happy then. Perhaps, she had nothing she loved except Jehovah, and no home but heaven."

"Indeed, she must have been happy, for she left some one behind her who had been to her so dear as to make her promise to become his own."

"I am glad she was so wise, then, as to hide from him that

she broke her heart to part with him; for she could not help it: and it was worthy of a young girl who could write a symphony," said Clara, very calmly, but with her eyes closed among the flowers she was holding in her hand. "Sir, what did they do with the symphony? and, if it is not rude, what did the rose and the violet have to do with this sad tale?"

"Oh, I should have told you first, but I wished to get the worst part over; I do not generally tell people. It was the day our prizes were distributed she took her death-blow, and I received from the Chevalier Seraphael, who superintended all our affairs, and who ordered the rewards, a breast-pin, with a violet in amethyst, in memory of certain words he spoke to me in a rather mystical chat we had held one day, in which he let fall, 'the violin is the violet.' And poor Maria received a silver rose, in memory of St. Cecilia, to whom he had once compared her, and to whom there was a too true resemblance in her fateful life. The rose was placed in her hair by the person I told you she loved best, just as she was about to stand forth before the orchestra, and when she fainted it fell to my feet. I gathered it up, and have kept it ever since. I do not know whether I had any right to do so, but the only person to whom I could have committed it, it was impossible to insult by reminding of her. In fact, he would not permit it; he left Cecilia after she was buried, and never returned."

Clara here raised her eyes, bright and liquid, and yet all-searching; I had not seen them so.

"I feel for him all that my heart can feel. Has he never ceased to suffer? Was she all to him?"

"He will never cease to suffer until he ceases to breathe, and then he will, perhaps, be fit to bear the bliss that was withdrawn from him as too great for any mortal heart; that is his feeling, I believe, for he is still now, and uncomplaining—ever proud, but only proud about his sorrow. Some day you will, I trust, hear him play, and you will agree with me how that grief must have grown into a soul so passionate."

"You mean, when you say he is proud, he will not be comforted, I suppose? There are persons like that, I know; but I do not understand it."

"I hope you never will, Miss Benette. You must suffer with your whole nature to refuse comfort."

"To any one so suffering I should say, the comfort is that all those who suffer are reserved for joy."

"Not here, though."

"But it will not be less joy because it is saved for by and by. Now that way of talking makes me angry; I believe there is very little faith."

"Very little, I grant. But poor Florimond Anastase does not fail there."

She stopped beside me as we were pacing the lawn.

"Florimond Anastase! you did not say so? Do you mean the great player? I have heard of that person."

Her face flushed vividly, as rose hues flowing into pearl, her aspect altered, she seemed convicted of some mistaken conclusion; but, recovering herself almost instantly, resumed:—

"Thank you for telling me that story; it will make me better, I hope. I do not deserve to have grown up so well and strong. May I do my duty for it, and, at least, be grateful! You did not say what was done with the symphony?"

"The person I mentioned would not allow it to be retained. And, indeed, what else could be done? It was buried in her virgin grave—a maiden work. She sleeps with her music, and I know not who could have divided them."

"You have told me a story that has turned you all over like the feeling before a thunderstorm. I will not hear a word more. You cannot afford to talk of what affects you. Now, let me be very impertinent, and change the key."

"By all means; I have said quite enough, and will thank you."

"There is Laura in the arbour, just across the grass; we will go to her, if you please, and you shall see her pretty pink frock among the roses instead of my black gown. On the way I will tell you that there is some one, a lady too, so much interested in you that she was going down to your neighbourhood on purpose to find out about you; but I prevented her from coming, by saying you would be here, and she answered—

" 'Tell him, then, to come and call upon me.' "

"It can only have been one living lady who would have sent that message—Miss Lawrence. Actually I had forgotten all about her, and she returns upon me with a strong sense of my own ingratitude. I will certainly call upon her, and I shall be only too glad to identify my benefactress."

"That you cannot do; she will not allow it; at least, to this hour she persists in perfect innocence of the fact."

"That she provided us both with exactly what we wanted at exactly the right time? She chalked out *my* career, at

least. I'll make her understand how I feel. Is she not a character?"

"Not more so than yourself, but still one, certainly; and a peculiarity of hers is, that generous—too generous almost—as she is, she will not suffer the slightest allusion to her generousities to be made, nor hint to be circulated that she has a heart at all."

Laura was sitting in the arbour, which was now at hand, but not, as Clara prophesied, among the roses in any sense, for the green branches that festooned the lattice were flowerless until the later summer, and her face appeared fading into a mist of green. The delicate leaves framed her as a picture of melancholy that has attired itself in mirth, which mirth but served to fling out the shadow by contrast, and betray the source. Clara sat on one side, I on the other, and presently we went in to tea. But I did not hear the voice I longed for that evening, nor was the pianoforte opened that I so well remembered standing in its "dark corner."

CHAPTER XLII

I DETERMINED not to let a day pass without calling on Miss Lawrence, for I had obtained her address before I left the cottage, and I set forth the following morning. It was in the midst of a desert of west-end houses, none of which have any peculiar characteristic, or suggest any peculiar notion. When I reached the door, I knocked, and it being opened, gave in my card to the footman, who showed me into a dining-room, void of inhabitants, and there left me.

It seemed strange enough to my perception, after I could sit down to breathe, that a lady should live all by herself in such an immense place; but I corrected myself by remembering she might possibly not live by herself, but have brothers, sisters, nay, any number of relations or dependants. She certainly did not dine in that great room, at that long table polished as a looking-glass, where half a regiment might have messed for change. There were heavy curtains, striped blue and crimson, and a noble sideboard framed in an arch of yellow marble.

The walls were decorated with deep-toned pictures on a ground almost gold colour; and I was fastened upon one I could not mistake as a Murillo, when the footman returned, but

only to show me out, for Miss Lawrence was engaged. I was a little crestfallen, not conceitedly so, but simply feeling I had better not have taken her at her word, and retreated in some confusion. Returning very leisurely to my two apartments near the Strand, and stopping very often on the way at music or print-shops, I did not arrive there for at least an hour, and was amazed on my entrance to find a note, directed to myself, lying upon the parlour table-cloth.

I appealed to my landlady from the top of the kitchen stairs, and she said a man in livery had left it, and was to call for an answer. I read the same on the spot; it had no seal to break, but was twisted backwards and forwards, and had this merit, that it was very difficult to open. It was from Miss Lawrence, without any comment on my call, but requesting my company that very evening to dinner, at the awful hour of seven. Never having dined at seven o'clock in my existence, nor even at six, I was lost in the prospect, and almost desired to decline, but that I had no excuse of any kind on hand; and therefore compelled myself to frame a polite assent, which I dispatched and then sat down to practise.

I made out to myself that she would certainly be alone, as she was the very person to have fashionable habits on her own account; or at least, that she would be surrounded merely by the people belonging to her in her home. But I was still unconfessedly nervous when I drew the door after me and issued into the streets, precisely as the quarter chimes had struck for seven, and while the streets still streamed with daylight, and all was defined as at noon.

When I entered the square so large and still, with its broad roads and tranquil centre-piece of green, I was appalled to observe a carriage or two, and flattered myself they were at another door; but they had drawn up at the very front, alas! that I had visited in the morning. I was compelled to advance, after having stood aside to permit a lady in purple satin, and two younger ladies in white, to illustrate the doorway in making their procession first. Then I came on, and was rather surprised to find myself so well treated; for a gentleman out of livery, in neater black clothes than a clergyman, deprived me of my hat, and showed me upstairs directly. It struck me very forcibly that it was a very good thing my hair had the habit of staying upon my forehead as it should do, and that I was not anxious to tie my neck-handkerchief over again, as I was to be admitted into the drawing-room *in statu quo*.

I ascended. It was a well-staircase, whose great height was easy of attainment from the exceeding lowness of the steps—stone—with a narrow crimson centre strip, soft as thick-piled velvet. On the landing-place was a brilliant globe of humming-birds, interspersed with gem-like spars and many a moss-wreath. The drawing-room door was opened for me before I had done looking; I walked straight in, and by instinct straight up to the lady of the house, who as instantly met me with a frank familiarity that differs from all other, and supersedes the rarest courtesies.

I had a vague idea that Miss Lawrence must have been married since I saw her, so completely was she mistress of herself, and so easy was her deportment—not to speak of her dress, which was black lace, with a single feather in her hair of the most vivid green; but unstudied as very few costumes are, even of married women. She was still Miss Lawrence, though, for some one addressed her by name—a broad-featured man behind her—and she turned her head alone, and answered him over her shoulder.

She dismissed him very shortly, or sent him to some one else, for she led me—as a queen might lead one of her knights, by her finger-tips small as a Spaniard's, upon the tips of my gloves, while she held her own gloves in her other hand—to a gentleman upon the rug, a real gentleman of the old school, to whom she introduced me simply as to her father; and then she brought me back again to a low easy-chair, out of a group of easy-chairs close by the piano, and herself sat down quite near me, on the extreme corner of an immense embroidered ottoman.

"You see how it is, my dear Mr. Auchester," she began in her genial voice, "a dinner, which I should not have dreamed to annoy you with, but for one party we expect. You have seen Seraphael, of course, and the little Burney? or perhaps not; they have been in town only two days."

I was about to express something rather beyond surprise, when a fresh appearance at the door carried her away, and I could only watch the green plume in despair as it waved away from me. To stifle my sensations, I just glanced round the room; it was very large, but so high and so apportioned, that one felt no space to spare.

The draperies, withdrawn for the sunset smile to enter, were of palest, sky-colour, the walls of the palest blush, the tables in corners, the chairs in clusters, the cabinets in niches, gilt and

carven, were of the deepest blue and crimson, upon a carpet of all imaginable hues, like dashed flower petals. Luxurious as was the furniture, in nothing it offended even the calmest taste, and the choicest must have lavished upon it a prodigal leisure.

The pianoforte was a grand one, of dark and lustrous polish; its stools were velvet; a large lamp, unlighted, with gold tracery over its moonlike globe, issued from a branch in the wall immediately over it, and harmonised with a circle of those same lamps above the centre ottoman, and with the same upon the mantel-shelf guarding a beautiful French clock, and reflected in a sheet of perfect glass sweeping to the ceiling.

There were about five-and-twenty persons present, who seemed multiplied, by their manner and their dresses, into thrice as many, and who would have presented a formidable aspect but for the hopes roused within me to a tremendous anticipation. Still I had time, during the hum and peculiar rustle, to scrutinise the faces present. There were none worth carrying away, except that shaded by the emerald plume, and I followed it from chair to chair, fondly hoping it would return to mine. It did not; and it was evident we were waiting for some one.

There was a general lull; two minutes by my watch (as I ascertained very improperly) it lasted—and two minutes seems very long before a set dinner. Suddenly, while I was yet gazing after our hostess, the door flew open, and I heard a voice repeat—

“The Chevalier Seraphael and Mr. Burney!”

They entered calmly, as I could hear—not see, for my eyes seemed to turn in my head, and I involuntarily looked away. The former approached the hostess, who had advanced almost to the door to meet him, and apologised, but very slightly, for his late appearance, adding a few words in a lower tone which I could not catch. He was still holding his companion by the hand, and, before they had time to part, the dinner was announced with state.

I lost sight of him long before I obeyed the summons, leading a lady assigned to me, a head taller than myself, who held a handkerchief in her hand, that looked like a lace veil, and shook it in my face as we walked down the stairs. I can never sympathise with the abuse heaped upon these dinner-parties, as I have heard, since I recall that especial occasion, not only grateful, but with a sense of its Arabian Night-like charm: the long table, glistening with damask too white for the eye

to endure, the shining silver, the flashing crystal, the blaze and mitigated brightness, the pyramid of flowers, the fragrance, and the picture quiet.

As we passed in noiselessly and sat down one by one, I saw that the genius, apart from these, was seated by Miss Lawrence, at the top of the table, and I was at the very bottom, though certainly opposite. Starwood was on my own side, but far above me. I was constrained to talk with the lady I had seated next me, and—as she did not disdain to respond at length—to listen while she answered; but I was not constrained to look upon her, nor did I, nor anything but that face so long removed, so suddenly and inexplicably restored.

It is impossible to describe the nameless change that had crept upon those faultless features, nor how it touched me, clove to my heart within. Seraphael had entirely lost the flitting healthful bloom of his very early youth; a perfect paleness toned his face, as if with purity outshadowed; such pearly clearness flinging into relief the starry distance of his full, deep-coloured eyes; the forehead more bare, more arched, was distinctly veined; and the temples were of chiselled keenness; the cheek was thinner, the Hebrew contour more defined; the countenance had gained in apparent calm, but when meeting his gaze you could peer into those orbs so evening-blue, their starlight was passionately restless.

He was talking to Miss Lawrence; he scarcely ceased, but his conversation was evidently not that which imported anything to himself; not the least shade of change thwarted the paleness I have mentioned, which was that of watchfulness or of intense fatigue. She to whom he spoke, on the contrary, seemed passed into another form; she brightened more and more, she flashed, not only from her splendid eyes, but from her glowing cheek, her brilliant smile; she was on fire with joy that would not be extinguished; it assuredly was the time of "all her wealth," and, had her mood possessed no other charm, it would have excited my furious taste by its interesting contrast with his pale aspect and indrawn expression.

It was during dessert, when the converse had sprung up like a sudden air in a calm, when politeness quickened and elegance unconsciously thawed, that—as I watched the little hands I so loved gleaming in the purple of the grapes which the light fingers separated one by one—I passed insensibly to the countenance; it was smiling, and for me; a sudden light broke through the lips, which folded themselves again instantly, as

if never to smile again; but not until I had known the dawn of the old living expression, that though it had slept I felt now was able to awaken, and with more thankfulness than I can put into words. He was of those who stood at the door when the ladies withdrew, and after their retreat, he began to speak to me across the table, serving me, with a skill I could not appreciate too delicately, to the merest trivialities, and making a sign to Starwood to take the chair now empty next me.

This was exactly what I wanted, for I had not seen him in the least—not that I was afraid he had altered, but that I was anxious to encounter him the same. Although still a little one, he had grown more than I expected; his blue eye was the same—the same shrinking lip—but a great power seemed called out of both; he was exceedingly formed, muscular though delicate; his voice was that which I remembered, but he had caught Seraphael's accent, and quite slightly, his style—only not his manner, which no one could approach or imitate. I learned from Starwood, as we sipped our single glass of wine, that the Chevalier had been to Miss Lawrence's that very morning.

"He told me where he was going, and left me at the hotel; when he came back he said we were invited for to-night. Miss Lawrence had asked him to spend one evening, and he was engaged for every one but this. She was very sorry, she said, that her father had a party to-day. The Chevalier, however, did not mind, he told her, and should be very happy to come anyhow."

"But how does it happen that he is so constantly engaged? it cannot be to concerts every evening?"

"Carl, you have no idea how much he is engaged; the rehearsals are to be every other day, and the rest of the evenings he has been worried into accepting invitations. I wish to goodness people would let him alone; if they knew what I know they would."

"What, my dear boy?"

"That for every evening he spends in company, he sits up half the night; I know it, for I have watched that light under his door, and can hear him make the least little stir, when all is so quiet. At least, I could at Stralenfeld, where he stayed last, for my room was across the landing-place; and since we came to London, he told me he has not slept."

"I should think you might entreat him to do otherwise, Starwood, or at least request his friends to do so."

"He might have no friends, so far as any influence they have goes. Just try yourself, Carl, and, when you see his face, you will not be inclined to do so any more."

"You spoke of rehearsals, Star: what may these be? I have not heard anything."

"I only know that he has brought with him two symphonies, three or four quartets, and a great roll of organ fugues, besides the score of his oratorio."

"I had no idea of such a thing. An oratorio?"

"It is what he wrote in Italy, some time ago, and only lately went over and prepared. It is in manuscript."

"Shall we hear it?"

"It is for the third or fourth week in June, but has been kept very quiet."

"How did Miss Lawrence come to know him? she did not use to know him."

"She seems to know everybody, and to get her own way in everything. You might ask her; she would tell you, and there would be no fear of her being angry."

At last we rose. The lamps were lighted when we returned to the drawing-room; it was nearly ten o'clock, but all was brilliant—festive. I had scarcely found a seat when Seraphael touched my shoulder.

"I want very much to go, Charles. Will you come home with me? I have all sorts of favours to ask of you, and that is the first."

"But, Sir, Miss Lawrence is going to the piano; will not you play first?"

"Not at all to-night: we agreed. There are many here who would rather be excused from music; they can get it at the opera."

He laughed, and so did I. He then placed his other hand on Starwood, still touching my shoulder, when Miss Lawrence approached—

"Sir, you know what you said, nor can I ask you to retract it. But may I say how sorry I am to have been so exacting this morning? It was a demand upon your time I would not have made had I known what I now know."

"What is that? pray have the goodness to tell me, for I cannot imagine."

"That you have brought with you what calls upon every one to beware how he or she engages you with trifles, lest they suffer from that repentance which comes too late. I hear of your

great work, and shall rely upon you to allow me to assist you, if it be at all possible I can in the very least and lowest degree."

She spoke earnestly, with an eager trouble in her air. He smiled serenely.

"Oh! you quite mistake my motive, Miss Lawrence; it had not to do with music; it was because I had no sleep that I wished to retire early, and you must permit me to make amends for my awkwardness. If it will not exhaust your guests, as I see you were about to play, let me make the opening, and oblige me by choosing what you like best."

"Sir, I cannot refuse, selfish as I am, to permit myself such exquisite pleasure. There is another thirsty soul here who will be all the better for a taste of heavenly things."

She turned to me elated. I looked into his face; he moved to the piano, made no gesture either of impatience or satisfaction, but drew the stool to him, and when seated, glanced to Miss Lawrence, who stood beside him, and whispered something. I drew, with Starwood, behind, where I could watch his hands.

He played for perhaps twenty minutes; an andante from Beethoven, an allegro from Mozart, an aria from Weber, cathedral echoes from Purcell, fugue-points from Bach, and, mixing them like gathered flowers, bound them together with a wild delicious *scherzo* finale, his own. But, though that playing was indeed unto me as heaven in forecast, and though it filled the heart up to the brim, it was extremely cold, and I do not remember ever feeling that he was separable from his playing before. When he arose so quietly, lifting his awful forehead from the curls that had fallen over it as he bent his face, he was unflushed as calm, and he instantly shook hands with Miss Lawrence, only leaving her to leave the room. I followed him naturally, remembering his request, but she detained me a moment to say:—

"You must come and see me on Thursday, and must also come to breakfast. I shall be alone, and have something to show you. You are going along with him, I find—so much the better; take care of him; and good-night."

Starwood had followed Seraphael implicitly; they were both below. We got into a carriage at the door, and were driven I knew not whither; but it was enough to be with him, even in that silent mood.

With the same absent grace he ordered another bed-room when we stayed at his hotel. I could no more have remon-

strated with him than with a monarch when we found ourselves in the stately sitting-room.

"A pair of candles for the chamber," was his next command; and when they were brought he said to us, "The waiter will show you to your rooms, dear children; you must not wait a moment."

I could not, so I felt, object, nor entreat him himself to sleep. Starwood and I departed; and, whether it was from the novelty of the circumstances, or my own transcending happiness, or whether it was because I put myself into one of Starwood's dresses in default of my own, I do not conjecture; but I certainly could not sleep, and was forced to leave it alone.

I sat upright for an hour or two, and then rolled amongst the great hot pillows; I examined the register of the grate; I looked into the tall glass at my own double; but all would not exhaust me, and towards the very morning I left my bed, and made a sally upon the landing-stage. I knew the number of Seraphael's door, for Starwood had pointed it out to me as we passed along, and I felt drawn, as by odyllic force, to that very metal lock.

There was no crack, but a key-hole, and the key-hole was bright as any star; I peeped in also, and shall never forget my delight yet dread, to behold that outline of a figure which decided me to make an entrance into untried regions, upon inexperienced moods. Without any hesitation I knocked; but, recalling to myself his temperament, I spoke simultaneously—

"Dear Sir, may I come in?"

Though I waited not for his reply, and opened the door quite innocent of the ghostly apparel I wore—and how very strange must have been my appearance!—never shall I forget the look that came home to me as I advanced more near him; that indrawn, awful aspect, that sweetness without a smile.

The table was loaded with papers, but there was no strew—that "spirit" ever moulded to harmony its slightest "motion;" one delicate hand was outspread over a sheet, a pen was in the other; he did not seem surprised, scarcely aroused. I rushed up to him precipitately.

"Dear, dearest Sir, I would not have been so rude, but I could not bear to think you might be sitting up, and I came to see. I pray you, for God's sake, do go to bed!"

"Carl, very Carl, little Carl, great Carl!" he answered,

with the utmost gentleness, but still unsmiling, "why should I go to bed? and why shouldest thou come out of thine?"

"Sir, if it is anything, I cannot sleep while you are not sleeping, and while you ought to be besides."

"Is that it? How very kind, how good! I do not wake wilfully; but if I am awake I must work; thou knowest that. In truth, Carl, hadst thou not been so weary, I should have asked thee this very night what I must ask thee to-morrow morning."

"Ask me now, sir, for, if you remember, it *is* to-morrow morning already."

"Go, get into your bed, then."

"No, Sir, certainly not while you are sitting there."

A frown, like the shadow of a butterfly, floated over his forehead.

"If thou wilt have it so, I will even go to this naughty bed; but not to sleep. The fact is, Carl, I cannot sleep in London. I think that something in the air distresses my brain; it will *not* shut itself up. I was about to ask thee whether there is no country, nothing green, no pure wind, to be had within four miles?"

"Sir, you have hit upon a prodigious providence. There is, as I can assure you experimentally, fresh green, pure country air of heaven's own distilling, within that distance, and there is also much more—there is something you would like even better."

"What is that, Carlomein?"

"I will not tell you, Sir, unless you sleep to-night."

"To be sly becomes thee, precisely because thou art not a fox. I will lie down; but sleep is God's best gift, next to love, and He has deprived me of both."

"If I be sly, Sir, you are bitter. But there is not too much sleight, nor bitterness either, where they can be expressed from words. So, Sir, come to bed!"

"Well spoken, Carlomein; I am coming—sleep thou!"

But I would not, and I did not leave him until I had seen his head laid low in all the bareness of its beauty—had seen his large eyelids fall, and had drawn his curtains in their softest gloom around the burdened pillow. Then I, too, went back to bed, and I slept delectably and dreamless.

CHAPTER XLIII

VERY late I slept, and before I had finished dressing, Starwood came for me. Seraphael had been down some time, he told me; I was very sorry, but relieved to discover how much more of his old bright self he wore than on the previous evening.

"Now, Carlomein," he began immediately, "we are going on a pilgrimage directly after breakfast."

I could tell he was excited, for he ate nothing, and was every moment at the window. To Starwood his abstinence seemed a matter of course; I was afraid, indeed, that it was no new thing. I could not remonstrate, however, having done quite enough in that line for the present. It was not half-past ten when we found ourselves in an open carriage, into which the Chevalier sprang last, and in springing, said to me: "Give your own orders, Carlomein." I was for an instant lost, but recovered myself quite in time to direct, before we drove from the hotel, to the exact locality of Clara's cottage, unknowing whether I did well or ill, but determined to direct to no other place. As we passed from London, and met the breeze from fields and gardens, miles and miles of flower-land, I could observe a clearing of Seraphael's countenance, its wan shadow melted, he seemed actually abandoned to enjoyment; though he was certainly in his silent mood, and only called out for my sympathy by his impressive glances as he stood up in the carriage with his hat off, and swaying to and fro. And when we reached, after a rapid, exhilarating drive, the winding road with its summer trees in youngest leaf, he only began to speak—he had not before spoken.

"How refreshing!" he exclaimed, "and what a lovely shade! I will surely not go on a step farther, but remain here and make my bed. It will be very unfortunate for me if all those pretty houses that I see are full, and how can we get at them?"

"I am nearly sure, Sir, that you can live here if you like, or close upon this place; but if you will allow me I will go on first and announce your arrival to a friend of mine, who will be rather surprised at our all coming together, though she would be more happy than I could express for her, to welcome you at her house."

"It is then *that* I was brought to see—a friend of thine—

thou hast not the assurance to tell me that any friend of thine will be glad to welcome another! But go, Carlomein!"—and he opened the carriage-door—"go and get over thy meeting first; we will give thee time. Oh! Carlomein, I little thought what a man thou hadst grown when I saw thee so tall; get out, and go quickly; I would not keep thee now for all the cedars of Lebanon!"

I could tell his mood now very accurately, but it made no difference; I knew what I was about, or I thought I knew, and did not remain to answer. I ran along the road—I turned the corner—the white gate shone upon me—and again I stopped to breathe. More roses, more narcissus lambent as lilies—more sweetness, and still more rest! The grass had been cut that morning, and lay in its little heaps all over the sunny lawn. The gravel was warm to my feet as I walked to the door, and long before the door was opened, I heard a voice.

So ardent did my desire expand to identify it with its owner, that I begged the servant not to announce me, nor to disturb Miss Benette if singing. Thoné took the cue, gave me a kind of smile, and preceded me with a noiseless march to the very back parlour; I advanced on tiptoe, and crouching forwards. Laura, too, was there, sitting at the table; she neither read nor worked, nor had anything in her hands, but, with more tact than I should have expected from her, only bowed, and did not move her lips. In the morning light my angel sat, and her notes, full orbéd and star-like, descended upon my brain. Few notes I heard—she was just concluding—the strain ebbed as the memory of a kiss itself dissolving—but I heard enough to know that her voice was indeed the realisation of all her ideal promise. I addressed her as she arose, and told her, in very few words, my errand. She was perturbless as usual, and only looked enchanted, the enchantment betraying itself in the eye, not in any tremble or the faintest flush.

"Do bring them, Sir!" she said, "and as you say this gentleman has eaten nothing, I will try what I can do to make him eat. It is so important, that I wonder you could allow him to come out until he had breakfasted"—for I had told her of his impatience—"afterwards, if he likes, he can go to see the houses. There are several, I do believe, if they have not been taken since yesterday."

I went back to the carriage, and it was brought on to the gate, I walking beside it. Thoné was waiting, and held it open—the sweet hay scented every breath.

"Oh, how delicious!" said Seraphael, as he alighted, standing still and looking around.

The meadows, the hedges, the secluded ways, first attracted him; and then the garden, which I thought he would never have overpassed—then the porch, in which he stood.

"And this is England!" he exclaimed; "it is strange how unlike it is to that wild dream-country I went to when last I came to London. This is more like heaven, quiet and full of life!"

These words recalled to me Clara. He had put his head into the very midst of those roses that showered over the porch.

"Oh! I must gather one rose of all these—there are so many, she will never miss it."

And then he laughed. A soft, soft echo of his laugh was heard—it startled me by its softness, it was so like an infant's. I looked over my shoulder, and there, in the shadow of the hall, I beheld her, her very self. It was she indeed who laughed, and her eye yet smiled. Without waiting for my introduction, she curtsied with a profound but easy air, and while, to match this singular greeting, Seraphael made his regal bow, she said, looking at him, "You shall have all the roses, Sir, and all my flowers, if you will let my servant gather them; for I believe you might prick your fingers, there being also thorns. But while Thoné is at that work, perhaps you will like to walk in out of the sun, which is too hot for you, I am sure." She led us to the parlour where she had been singing—the piano still stood open.

"But," said Seraphael, taking the first chair as if it were his own; "we disturb you! What were you doing, you and Carl? I ask his pardon—Mr. Auchester."

"We two did nothing, sir. I was only singing, but that can very well be put off till after breakfast, which will be ready in a few minutes."

Breakfast? I thought, but Clara's face told no tales—her loveliness was unruffled. The clear blue eye, the divine mouth, were evidently studies for Seraphael; he sat and watched her eagerly, even while he answered her.

"You look as if you had had breakfast!"

"Indeed I am very hungry, and so is my friend, Mr. Auchester."

"He always looks so, Mademoiselle!" replied the Chevalier, mirthfully; "but I do really think he might be elegant enough to tell me your name. He has forgotten to do so in his em-

barrassment; I cannot guess whether it be English, French, or German, Italian, Greek, or Hebrew."

"I am called Clara Benette, Sir, that is my name."

"It is not Benette—La Benetta Benedetta? Carlomein, why hast thou so forgotten? Allow me to congratulate you, Mademoiselle, on possessing the right to be so named. And for this do I give you joy; that not for your gifts it has been bestowed, nor for that genius which is alone of the possessor, but for that goodness which I now experience, and feel to have been truly ascribed to you."

He stood to her and held out his hand; calmly she gave hers to it, and gravely smiled.

"Sir, I thank you the more because I *know* your name. I hope you will excuse me for keeping you so long without your breakfast."

He laughed again, and again sat down; but his manner, though of that playful courtliness, was quite drawn out to her. He scarcely looked at Laura; I did not even believe that he was aware of her presence, nor was I aware of the power of his own upon her. After ten minutes Thoné entered, and went up to Clara. She motioned to us all then, and we arose; but as she looked at Seraphael first, he took her out and into the dining-room. The table was snowed with damask—flowers were heaped up in the centre, a bowl of honeysuckles and heartsease; the dishes here were white bread, brown bread, golden butter, new-laid eggs in a nest of moss, the freshest cream, the earliest strawberries; and before the chair which Clara took stood a silver chocolate jug foaming, and coffee above a day-pale spirit-lamp. On the sideboard were garnished meat, and poultry already carved, the decanters, and still more flowers; it was a feast raised as if by magic, and unutterably tempting at that hour of the day. Clara asked no questions of her chief guest, but pouring out both chocolate and coffee, offered them both; he accepted the former, nor refused the wing of a chicken which Thoné brought, nor the bread which Clara asked me to cut. I was perfectly astounded: she had helped herself also and was eating so quietly after administering her delicious cups all round, that no one thought of speaking. At last, Starwood, by one of those unfortunate chances that befall timid people, spoke, and instantly turned scarlet, dropping his eyes forthwith, though he only said, "I never saw the Chevalier eat so much." Clara answered, with her fork in her dimpled hand, "That is because you gentlemen have had a

long drive; it always raises the appetite to come out of London into the country. You cannot eat too much here."

"Do you think I shall find a house that will hold me and my younger son?" said Seraphael, presently, pointing at Starwood his slight finger, "and a servant or two?"

"If you like to send my servant, Sir, she will find out for you."

"No, perhaps you will not dislike to drive a little way with us. I know Carl will be so glad!"

"We shall be most pleased, Sir," she answered, quite quietly, though there was that in his expression which might easily have fluttered her. I could not at all account for this elfish mood, though I had been witness to freaks and fantasies in my boy-days. Never had I seen his presence affect any one so little as Clara. Had she not been of a loveliness so peculiarly genial, I should have called her cold; as it was, I felt he had never made himself more at home with any one in my sight. While, having graciously deferred to her the proposal for an instant search, he sauntered out into the little front garden, she went for her bonnet, and came down in it, a white straw, with a white satin ribbon and lining, and a little white veil of her own work, as I could tell directly I caught her face through its wavering and web-like tracery. Seraphael placed her in the carriage, and then looked back.

"Oh, Laura, that is, Miss Lemark, is not coming," observed Miss Benette—this did not strike me except as a rather agreeable arrangement, and off we drove. Fritz, Seraphael's own man, was on the box—a perfect German, of very reserved deportment, who, however, one could see, would have allowed Seraphael to walk upon him. His heavy demonstrations about situations and suitabilities made even Clara laugh, as they were met by Seraphael's wayward answers and skittish sallies. We had a very long round, and then went back to dinner with our lady; but Seraphael, by the time the moon had risen, fell into May-evening ecstasies with a very old-fashioned tenement, built of black wood, and girded by a quick-set hedge, because it suddenly, in the silver shine, reminded him of his own house in Germany, as he said. It was so near the cottage, that two persons might even whisper together over the low and moss-greened garden-wall.

The invitation of Miss Lawrence I could not forget, even through the intenser fascination spread about me. I returned with Seraphael to town again, and again to the country; he

having thither removed his whole effects—so important though of so slight bulk, they consisting almost entirely of scored and other compositions, which were safely deposited in a little empty room of the rambling house he had chosen. This room he and Starwood and I soon made fit to be seen and inhabited, by our distribution of all odd furniture over it, and all the conveniences of the story. Three large country-scented bedrooms, with beds big enough for three chevaliers in each, and two drawing-rooms were all that we cared for besides. Seraphael was only like a child that night that is preparing for a whole holiday; he wandered from room to room; he shut himself into pantry, wine-cellar, and china-closet; he danced like a day-beam through the low-ceiled sitting-chambers, and almost threw himself into the garden when he saw it out of the window. It was the wildest place, the walks all sown with grass, an orchard on a bank all moss, forests of fruit-trees and moss-rose bushes, and the great white lilies in ranks all round the close-fringed lawn; all old-fashioned flowers in their favourite soils, a fountain and a grotto, and no end of weeping ashes, arbours bent from willows, and arcades of nut and filbert-trees. The back of the house was veiled with a spreading vine—too luxuriant—that shut out all but fresh green light from the upper bed-rooms; but Seraphael would not have a spray cut off, nor did he express the slightest dissatisfaction at being overlooked by the chimneys and roof-hung windows of Clara's little cottage, which peeped above the hedge. The late inhabitant and present owner of the house, an eccentric gentlewoman, who abjured all innovation, had desired that no change should pass upon her tenement during her absence for a sea-side summer; even the enormous mastiff, chained in the yard to his own house, was to remain barking or baying as he listed; and we were rather alarmed, Starwood and I, to discover that Seraphael had let him loose, in spite of the warnings of the housekeeper, who rustled her scant black silk skirts against the doorstep in anger and in dread. I was about to make some slight movement in deprecation, for the dog was fiercely strong and of a tremendous expression indeed, but he only lay down before the Chevalier and licked the leather of his boots, afterwards following him over the whole place until darkness came, when he howled on being tied up again until Seraphael carried him a bone from our supper-table. Our gentle master retired to rest, and his candle-flame was lost in the moonlight, long before I could bring myself to go to bed. I can never de-

scribe the satisfaction, if not the calm, of lying between two poles of such excitement as the cottage and that haunted mansion.

CHAPTER XLIV

SERAPHAEL had desired me to stay with him, therefore the next morning I intended to give up my London lodgings on the road to Miss Lawrence's square, or rather out of the road. When I came downstairs into the sun-lit breakfast-room, I found Starwood alone, and writing to his father; but no Chevalier. Nor was he in his own room, for the sun was streaming through the vine-shade on the tossed bed-clothes, and the door and window were both open as I descended. Starwood said that he had gone to walk in the garden, and that we were not to wait for him. "What, without his breakfast?" said I. But Starwood smiled, such a meaning smile, that I was astonished, and could only sit down.

We ate and drank, but neither of us spoke. I was anxious to be off, and Star to finish his letter, though as we both arose and were still alone, he yet looked naughty. I would not pretend to understand him, for if he has a fault, that darling friend of mine, it is that he sees through people rather too soon, construing their intentions before they inform experience.

I could not make up my mind to ride, but set off on foot along the sun-glittering road, through emerald shades, past gold-flecked meadows, till through the mediant chaos of brick-fields and dust-heaps, I entered the dense halo surrounding London—"smoke the tiar of commerce"—as a pearl of poets has called it. The square looked positively lifeless when I came there, I almost shrank from my expedition, not because of any fear I had on my own account, but because all the inhabitants might have been asleep, behind the glaze of their many windows.

I was admitted noiselessly, and, as if expected, shown into the drawing-room, so large, so light, and splendid in the early sun. All was noiseless, too, within; an air of affluent calm pervaded as an atmosphere itself the rich-grouped furniture, the piano closed, the stools withdrawn. I was not kept two minutes; Miss Lawrence entered, in the act of holding out her hand. I was instantly at home with her, though she was one

of the grandest persons I ever saw. She accepted my arm, and, not speaking, took me to a landing higher, and to a room which appeared to form one of a suite, for a curtain extended across one whole side, a curtain as before an oratory in a dwelling-house.

Breakfast was outspread here; on the walls, a pale sea-green, shone delectable pictures in dead-gold frames, pictures, even to an inexperienced eye, pure relics of art. The windows had no curtains, only a broad gold cornice; the chairs were damask, white and green; the carpet oak-leaves, on a lighter ground. It was evidently a retreat of the lesser art; it could not be called a boudoir, neither ornament nor mirror, vase nor book-stand, broke the prevalent array. I said I had breakfasted, but she made me sit by her and told me—

“I have not, and I am sure you will excuse me. One must eat, and I am not so capable to exist upon little as you are. Yet you shall not sit, if you would rather see the pictures, because there are not too many to tire you in walking round. Too many together is a worse mistake than too few.”

I arose immediately, but I took opportunity to examine my entertainer in pauses as I moved from picture to picture. She wore black brocaded silk this morning, with a Venetian chain and her watch, and a collar all lace; her hair, the blackest I had ever seen except Maria's, was coiled in snake-like wreaths to her head so small behind, while it arched so broadly and benevolently over her noble eyes. She was older than I had imagined, and may have been forty at that time; the only observation one could retain about the fact being, that her gathered years had but served to soften every crudity of an extremely decided organisation, and to crown wisdom with refinement.

She soon pushed back her cup and plate, and came to my side. She looked suddenly, a little anxiously, at me.

“You must be rather curious to know why I asked you to come to me to-day; and were you not a gentleman, you would have been also curious, I fancy, to know why I could not see you on Tuesday. I want you to come this way.”

I followed; she slid the curtain along its rings, and we entered the oratory. I know not that it was so far unlike such precinct, for from thence art reared her consecrated offerings to the presence of every beauty. I felt this, and that the artist was pure in heart, even before her entire character faced my own. The walls here, of the same soft marine shade,

were also lighted by pictures; the strangest, the wildest, the least assorted, yet all according.

A peculiar and unique style was theirs; each to each presented the atmosphere of one imagination. Dark and sombrous woods, moon-pierced, gleamed dusky from a chair where they were standing frameless—resting against them a crowd of baby faces clustered in a giant flower-chalice—a great lotus was the hieroglyph of a third—on the walls faces smiled or frowned, huge profiles—dank pillars mirrored in rushy pools—fragments of heathen temples—domes of diaphanous distance in a violet sky—awful palms—dread oceans, with the last ghost-shadow of a wandering wreck. I stood lost, unaccustomed either to the freaks or the triumphs of pictorial art; I could only say in my amaze, “Are these all yours? How wonderful!” She smiled very carelessly.

“I did not intend you to look at those, except askance, if you were kind enough. I keep them to advertise my own deficiencies, and to compare the present with the past. The present is very aspiring, and *for* the present devours my future. I hope it will dedicate itself thereunto. I wish you to come here, to this light.”

She was placed before an immense easel to the right of a large-paned window, where the best London day streamed above the lower dimness. An immense sheet of canvas was turned away from us upon the easel; but in a moment she had placed it before us, and fell back in the same moment, a little from me.

Nor shall I ever forget that moment's issue. I forgot it was a picture, and all I could feel was a trance-like presence brought unto me in a day-dream of immutable satisfaction. On either side, the clouds, light golden and lucid crimson, passed into a central sphere of the perfect blue. And reared into that, as it were the empyrean of the azure, gleamed in full relief the head, life-sized, of Seraphael. The bosom white-vested, the regal throat, shone as the transparent depths of the moon, not moon-light, against the blue unshadowed. The clouds deeper, heavier, and of a dense violet, were rolled upon the rest of the form; the bases of those clouds as livid as the storm, but their edges, where they flowed into the virgin raiment, sun-fringed, glittering. The visage was raised, the head thrown back into the ether, but the eyes were drooping, the snow-sealed lips at rest. The mouth faint crimson, thrilling, spiritual, appalled by its utter reminiscence; the smile so fiery-soft just touched

the lips unparted. No symbol strewed the cloudy calm below, neither lyre, laurel-wreathed, nor flowery chaplet; but on either side, where the clouds disparted in wavering flushes and golden pallors, two hands of light, long, lambent, life-like, but not earthly, held over the brow a crown.

Passing my eye among the cloud-lights—for I cannot call them shadows—I could just gather with an eager vision, as one gathers the thready moon-crescent in a mid-day sky, that on either side a visage gleamed, veiled and drenched also in the rose-golden mist.

One countenance was dread and glorious, of sharp-toned ecstasy that cut through the quivering medium—a self-sheathed seraph—the other was mild and awful, informed with steadfast beauty, a shining cherub. They were Beethoven and Bach, as they might be known in heaven, but who, except the musician, would have known them for themselves on earth? It was not for me to speak their names—I could not utter them; my heart was dry; I was thirsty for the realisation of that picture promise.

The crown they uplifted in those soft shining hands was a circle of stars, gathered to each other out of that heavenly silence, and into the azure vague arose that brow, over which the conqueror's sign, suspended, shook its silver terrors. For such awful fancies shivered through the brain upon its contemplation, that I can but call it *transcendental*—beyond expression; the feeling, the fear, the mystery of starlight, pressed upon the spirit, and gave new pulses to the heart. The luminous essence from the large white points seemed rained upon that forehead and upon the deep tints of the god-like locks; they turned all clear upon their orbed clusters, they melted into the radiant halo which flooded, yet as with a glory one could not penetrate, the impenetrable elevation of the lineaments.

I dared only gaze; had I spoken, I should have wept, and I would not disturb the image by my tears. I soon perceived how awfully the paintress had possessed herself of the inspiration, the melancholy, and the joy. The crown, indeed, was grounded upon rest, and of unbroken splendour; but it beamed upon the aspect of exhaustion and longing strife, upon lips yet thirsty, and imploring patience.

I suppose my silence satisfied the artist; for, before I had spoken, or even unriveted my gaze, she said, herself—

“That I have worked upon for a year. I was allowing myself to dream one day—just such a day as this—last spring;

and insensibly my vision framed itself into form. The faces came before I knew—at least those behind the clouds—and having caught them, I conceived the rest. I could not, however, be certain of my impressions about the chief countenance, and I waited with it unfinished enough until the approach of the season, for I knew he was coming now, and before he arrived I sent him a letter to his house in Germany. I had a pretty business to find out the address, and wrote to all kinds of persons; but at last I succeeded, and my suit was also successful. I had asked him to sit to me.”

“Then you had not known him before? You did not know him all those years?”

“I had seen him often, but never known him. Oh, yes! I had seen his face. You have a tolerable share of courage, could you have asked him such a favour?”

“You see, Miss Lawrence, I have received so many favours from him without asking for them. Had I possessed such genius as yours, I should not only have done the same, but have felt to do it was my duty. It is a portrait for all the ages, not only for men, but for angels.”

“Only for angels, if fit at all. For that face is something beyond man’s utmost apprehension of the beautiful. It must ever remain a solitary idea to any one who has received it. You will be shocked if I tell you that his beauty prevails more with *me* than his music.”

“But is it not the immediate consequence of such musical investment?”

“I believe, on the contrary, that the musical investment, as you charmingly express it, is the direct consequence of the lofty organisation.”

“That is a new notion for me; I must turn it over before I take it home. I would rather consider the complement of his gifts to be that heavenly heart of his which endows them each and all with what must live for ever in unaltered perfection.”

“And it pleases me to feel that he is of like passions with us, protected from the infraction of laws celestial by the image of the Creator still conserved to his mortal nature, and stamping it with a character beyond the age. But about his actual advent. He answered my letter in person. I was certainly appalled to hear of his arrival, and that he was downstairs. I was up here muddling with my brushes, without knowing what to be at; up comes my servant—

“ ‘Mr. Seraphael.’ ”

"Imagine such an announcement! I descend—we meet—for the first time in private, except, indeed, on the occasion when his shadow was introduced to me, as you may remember. He was in the drawing-room, pale from travelling, full of langour left by sea-sickness, looking like a spirit escaped from prison. I was almost ashamed of my daring, far more so than alarmed. I thought he was about to appoint a day—but no. He said—

" 'I am at your service this morning, if it suits you; but as you did not favour me with your address, I could not arrange beforehand. I went to my music-sellers, and asked them about you. I need not tell you that you were known there, and that I am much obliged to them.'

"Actually it was a fact that I had not furnished him with my address, but I was perfectly innocent of my folly. What could I do but not lose a moment? I asked him to take refreshment; no, he had breakfasted, or dined, or something, and we came up here directly. I never saw such behaviour. He did not even inquire what I was about, but sat like a god in marble, just where I had placed him—out there. You perceive that I have lost the eyes, or at least have rendered them up to mystery. Well, when having caught the outline of the forehead, and touched the temples, I descended to those eyes, and saw they were full upon me: I could do nothing with them. I cannot paint light, only its ghost; nor fire, only its shade. His eyes are at once fire and light—I know of which the most; or, at least, that which is the light of fire. Even the streaming lashes scarcely tempered the radiance there. I let them fall, and veiled what one scarcely dares to meet, at least I. He sat to me for hours; but though I knew not how the time went, and may be forgiven for inconsideration, I had no idea that he was going straight to the committee of the choir-day, on the top of that sitting. I kept him long enough for what I wanted, and as he did not ask to see the picture, I did not show it him. He shall see it when it is finished."

"What finish does it require? I see no change that it can need to carry out the likeness, which is all we want."

"Oh, yes! more depth in the darkness, and more glory in the light; less electric expression, more ideal serenity; above all, more pain above the forehead, more peace about the crown. Moonlight without a moon, sunshine without the solar rays—the day of Heaven."

"I can only say, Miss Lawrence, that you deserve to do as you have done, and to feel that no one else could have done it."

"Very exclusive that feeling; but perhaps necessary. I have it, but my deserts will only be transcended if Seraphael himself shall approve. And now for another question—Will you go with me to this choir-day?"

"I am trying to imagine what you mean. I have not heard the name until you spoke it. Is it in the North?"

"Certainly not; though even York Minster would not be a bad notion—that is to say, it would suit our Beethoven exactly; but this is another hierarch. What do you think of an oratorio in Westminster Abbey, the conductor our own, the whole affair of his? No wonder you have heard nothing; it has been kept very snug, and was only arranged by the interposition of various individuals whose influence is more of mammon than of art; the objection at first being chiefly on the part of the profession, but that is overruled by their being pretty nearly every one included in the orchestra. Such a thing is never likely to occur again. Say that you will go with me. If it be anything to you, I shall give you one of the best seats in the very centre, where you will see and hear better than most people; imagine the music in that place of tombs, it is a melancholy but glorious project, may we realise it!"

I could not at present; it was out of the question; nor could I bear to stay; there was nothing for it but to make haste out, where the air made solitude. I bade the paintress good morning, and quitted her. I believe she understood my frame.

CHAPTER XLV

I WALKED home also, and was tolerably tired—entering the house as one at home there, I found nobody at home, no Starwood, no Chevalier. I lay upon the sofa in a day-dream or two, and, when rested, went out into the garden. I searched every corner, too, in vain, but wandering past the dividing hedge, a voice floated articulately over the still afternoon.

All was calm and warm, the slightest sound made way; and I hesitated not to scale the green barrier, nowhere too high for me to leap it, and to approach the parlour of the cottage in that unwonted fashion. I was in for pictures this while, I suppose; for when I reached the glass-doors that swept the lawn wide open, and could peep through them without dis-

turbing foot on that soft soil, I saw, indeed, another, a less impressive, not less expressive view. Clara sat at her piano, her side-face was in the light; his own, which I was sure to find there, in profile also, was immediately behind her; but as he stood the shade had veiled him, the shade from the trembling leaves without, through which one sunbeam shot, and upon the carpet kissed his feet. She was singing, as I could hear, scarcely see, for her lips opened not more than for a kiss, to sing. The strains moulded themselves imperceptibly, or as a warble shaken in the throat of a careless nightingale, that knew no listener.

Seraphael, as he stood apart drinking in the notes with such eagerness that his lips were also parted, had never appeared to me so borne out of himself, so cradled in a second nature. I could scarcely have believed that the face I knew so well, had yet an expression hidden I knew not of; but it was so, kindled at another fire than that which his genius had stolen from above, his eye was charged, his cheek flushed.

So exquisitely beautiful they looked together, he in that soft shadow, she in that tremulous light, that at first I noticed not a third figure, now brought before me. Behind them both, but sitting so that she could see his face, was Laura, or rather she half lay—some antique figures carved in statuary have an attitude as listless, that bend on monuments, or crouch in relieve. She had both her arms outspread upon the little work-table, hanging over the edge, the hands just clasped together, as reckless in repose; her face all colourless, her eyes all clear, but with scarcely more tinting, were fixed, wrapt, upon Seraphael.

I could not tell whether she was feeding upon his eye, his cheek, or his beauteous hair; all her life came forth from her glance, but it spent itself without expression. Still that deep, that feeding gaze, was enough for me; there was in it neither look of hope nor of despair as I could have interpreted it. I did not like to advance, and waited till my feet were stiff—but neither could I retire.

I waited while Clara, without comment on her part, or request on his, glided from song to scena, from the romance of a wilderness to the simplest trol. Her fingers just touched the keys as we touch them for the violin solo, supporting, but unnoticeable. At last, when afraid to be caught—for the face of the Chevalier in its new expression I rather dreaded—I went back like a thief, the way I came, and still more like a thief in that

I carried away a treasure of remembrance from those who knew not they had lost it.

I found Starwood yet out, and roved very impatiently all over the house until, at perhaps five o'clock, Seraphael came in for something. The dog in the yard barked out, but I was in no humour to let him loose, and ran straight into the hall.

"Carlomein," said the Chevalier, "I thought you were in London. Is it possible, my child, that you have not dined?" and he gave orders for an instant preparation. "I am truly vexed that I did not know it, but Sterne is gone to his father, and will stay till the last coach to-night. I thought you would be absent also."

"And so, Sir, I suppose you had determined to go without your dinner?"

He smiled.

"Not at all, Carlomein. The fact is I *have* dined. I could not resist La Benetta Benedetta. I never knew what young potatoes were until I tasted them over there."

"I dare say not," I thought; but I was wise enough to hold my tongue.

"Then, Sir, I shall dine alone, and very much I shall enjoy it. There is nothing I like so well as dining alone, except to dine alone with you."

"Carl! Carl! hadst thou been in that devil when he tempted Eve! Pardon, but I have come home for a few things, and have promised to return."

"Sir, if you will not think it rude, I must say, that for once in your life, you are enjoying what you confer upon others. I am so glad!"

"I thought it says, 'It is better to give than to receive.' I do like receiving; but perhaps that is because I cannot give this which I now receive. Carlomein, there is a spell upon thee; there is a charm about thee that makes thee lead all thou lovest to all they love! It is a thing I cannot comprehend, but am too content to feel."

He ran into his study, and returning, just glanced into the room with an air of *allegresse* to bid me adieu; but what had he in his arms if it were not the score of his oratorio? I knew its name by this time; I saw it in that nervous writing which I could read at any earthly distance—what was to be done with it, and what then? was he going to the rehearsal, or a rehearsal of his own?

I had not been half an hour quiet, playing to myself, having

unpacked my fiddle for the first time since I came to London, when the lady of the scanty silk arrived at my door, and aroused me. Some gentlemen had called to see the Chevalier, and as he was supposed to be absent, must see me. I went down into a great, dampish dining-room we had not lived in at all, and found three or four worthies, a deputation from the band and chorus, who had helplessly assembled two hours ago in London, and were at present waiting for the conductor.

It was no pleasant task to infringe the fragrant privacy of the cottage, but I had to do it. I went to the front gate this time, and sent up a message, that I might not render myself more intrusive than necessary. He came down as upon the wings of the wind, with his hat half falling from his curls, and flew to the deputation without a syllable to me; they carried him off in triumph, so immediately that I could only fancy he looked annoyed, and may have been about that matter mistaken.

Certainly Clara was not annoyed, whom I went indoors to see; Laura had vanished, and she herself was alone in the room, answering my first notes of admiration, merely, "Yes, I have sung to him a good while." I was, however, so struck by the change, not in manner, but in her mien, that I would stay on to watch, at the risk of being in the way more than ever in my days. Since I had entered, she had not once looked up; but an unusual flush was upon her face; she appeared serious, but intent—something seemed to occupy her. At last, after turning about the music-sheets that strewed the chamber everywhere, and placing them by in silence—and a very long time she took—she raised her eyes. Their lustre was indeed quickened; never saw I so much excitement in them; they were still not so grave as significant—full of unwonted suggestions. I ventured to say then—

"And now, Miss Benette, I may ask you what you feel about the personality of this hero?"

I could not put it better: she replied not directly, but came and sat beside me on the sofa, by the window. She laid her little hands into her lap, and her glance followed after them. I could see she was inexpressibly burdened with some inward revelation. I could not for a moment believe she trembled, but certainly there was a quiver of her lips—her silken curls so calm did not hide the pulsation, infinitinely rapid, of those temples where the harebell-azure veins pencilled the rose-flower skin. After a few moments' pause, during which she evidently collected herself, she addressed me, her own sweet voice as

clear as ever, but the same trouble in it that touched her gaze.

"Sir, I am going to tell you something, and to ask your advice besides."

"I am all attention!" indeed, I was in an agony to attend and learn.

"I have had a strange visitor this morning—very sudden, and I was not prepared. You will think me very foolish, when you hear what is the matter with me, that I have not written to Mr. Davy; but I prefer to ask you. You are more enlightened, though you are so young."

"Miss Benette, I know your visitor; for on returning home next door, I missed my master, and I knew he could be only here. What has he done that could possibly raise a difficulty, or said that could create a question? He is my unerring faith, and should be yours."

"I do not wonder; but I have not known him so long, you see, and contemplate him differently. I had been telling him, as he requested to know my plans, of the treatment I had received at the opera, and how I had not quite settled whether to come out now or next year as an actress. He answered—

"'Do neither.'

"I inquired why?

"'You must not accept any engagement for the stage in England, and pray do not hold out to them any idea that you will.'

"Now, what does he mean? Am I to give up my only chance of being able to live in England? for I wish to live here. And am I to act unconscientiously? for my conscience tells me that the pure-hearted should always follow their impulses. Now, I know very few persons; but I am born to be known of many, at least I suppose so, or why was I gifted with this voice, my only gift?"

"Miss Benette, you cannot suppose the Chevalier desires your voice to be lost. Has he not been informing and interpenetrating himself with it the whole morning? He has a higher range in view for you, be assured, or he had not persuaded you, I am certain, to annul your present privileges. He has the right to will what he pleases."

"And are we all to obey him?"

"Certainly; and only him—in matters musical. If you knew him as I do, you would feel this."

"But is it like a musician, to draw me away from my duty?"

"Not obviously; but there may be no duty here. You do not know how completely, in the case of dramatic, and, indeed, of all other art, the foundations are out of course."

"You mean they do not fulfil their first intentions. But then nothing does, except, certainly, as it was first created. We have lost that long."

"Music, Miss Benette, it appears to me, so long as it preserves its purity, may consecrate all the forms of art by raising them into its own atmosphere—govern them as the soul the body. But where music is itself degraded—its very type defaced—its worship rendered ridiculous—its nature mere name, by its own master, the rest falls. I know not much about it, but I know how little the drama depends on music in this country, and how completely, in the first place, one must lend one's self to its meanest effect in order to fulfil the purpose of the writer. All writers for the stage have become profane; and dramatic writers whom we still confess to are banished from the stage in proportion to the elevation of their works. I even go so far as to think an artist does worse who lends an incomparable organ to such service than an unheeded player (myself for example), who should form one in the ranks of such an orchestra as that of our opera-houses, where the bare notion or outline of harmony is all that is provided for us. While the idea of the highest prevails with us, our artist-life must harmonise, or Art will suffer—and it suffers enough now. I have said too long a"say, and perhaps I am very ignorant, but this is what I think."

"You cannot speak too much, Sir, and you know a great deal more than I do. My feeling was, that I could perhaps have shown the world that simplicity of life is not interfered with by a public career; and that those who love what is beautiful, must also love what is good, and endeavour to live up to it besides. I have spoken to several musicians abroad, who came to me on purpose; they all extolled my voice, and entreated me to sing upon the stage. I did so then, because I was poor, and had several things I wished to do; but I cannot say I felt at home with music on the stage in Italy. The gentleman who was here to-day was the first who disturbed my ideas, and dissuaded me. I was astonished, not because I am piqued—for you do not know how much I should prefer to live a quiet life—but because everybody else had told me a different story. I do not like to think I shall only be able to sing in concerts, for there are very few concerts that content

me, and I do so love an orchestra. Am I to give it all up? If this gentleman had said, 'Only sing in this opera, or that,' I could have made up my mind. But am I never to sing in any? Am I to waste my voice that God gave me, as he gives to others a free hand, or a great imagination? You cannot think so, with all your industry, and all your true enthusiasm."

"Miss Benette, you must not be shocked at what I shall now say, because I mean it with all reverence. I could no more call in question the decision of such genius than I could that of Providence, if it sent me death-sickness or took away my friends. I am certain that the motive, which you cannot make clear just yet, is that you would approve of."

"And you also, Sir?"

"And I also, though it is as dark to me as to you. Let it stand over, then; but for all our sakes do not thwart him; he has suffered too much to be thwarted."

"Has he suffered? I did not know that."

"Can such an one live and not suffer? A nature which is all love—an imagination all music."

"I thought that he looked delicate, but very happy—happy as a child or an angel. I have seen your smile turn bitter, Sir; pardon! but never his. I am sure if it matters to him that I should accede, I will do so, and I cannot thank you enough for telling me."

"Miss Benette, if you are destined to do anything great for music, it may be in one way as well as in another; that is, if you befriend the greatest musician, it is as much as if you befriended music. Now you cannot but befriend him if you do exactly as he requests you."

"In all instances, you recommend?"

"I, at least, could refuse him nothing. The nourishment such a spirit requires is not just the same as our own, perhaps, but it must not the less be supplied. If I could, now, clean his boots better than any one else, or if he liked my cookery, I would give up what I am about and take a place in his service."

"What! you would give up your violin, your career, your place among the choir of ages?"

"I would, for in rendering a single hour of his existence on earth unfretted—in preserving to him one day of ease and comfort—I should be doing more for all people, all time, at least for the ideal, who will be few in every age, but many in all the ages; and who I believe leaven society better than a priesthood. I would not say so except to a person who

perfectly understands me; for as I hold laws to be necessary, I would infringe no social or religious regime by one heterodox utterance to the ear of the uninitiated; still, having said it, I keep to my text, that you must do exactly as he pleases. He has not set a seal upon your throat at present, if you have been singing all the morning."

"I have been singing from his new great work. There is a contralto solo, 'Art thou not from Everlasting?' which spoiled my voice; I could not keep the tears down, it was so beautiful and entreating. He was a little angry at me; at least he said, 'You must not do that.' There is also a very long piece which I scarcely tried, we had been so long over the other, which he made me sing again and again until I composed myself. What a mercy Mr. Davy taught us to read so fast! I have found it help me ever since. Do you mean to go to this oratorio?"

"I am to go with Miss Lawrence. How noble, how glorious she is!"

"Your eyes sparkle when you speak of her. I knew you would there find a friend."

"I hope you, too, will hear it, Miss Benette. I shall speak to the Chevalier about it."

"I pray you not to do so; there will not be any reason, for I find out all about those affairs. Take care of yourself, Mr. Auchester, or rather make Miss Lawrence take care of you; she will like to have to do so."

"I must go home if it is not to be just yet, and return on purpose for the day."

"But that will fatigue you very much; cannot you prevent it? One ought to be quiet before a great excitement."

"Oh! you have found that; I cannot be quiet until afterwards."

"I have never had a great excitement," said Clara, innocently; "and I hope I never may. It suits me to be still."

"May that calm remain in you and for you with which you never fail to heal the soul within your power, Miss Benette!"

"I should indeed be proud, Mr. Auchester, to keep you quiet, but that you will never be until it is for ever."

"In that sense no one could, for who could ever desire to awaken from that rest? and from all rest here it is but to awaken."

I felt I ought to go, or that I might even remain too long. It

was harder at that moment to leave her than it had ever been before; but I had a prescience that for that very reason it was better to depart. Starwood had returned, I found, and was waiting about in the evening, before the candles came.

We both watched the golden shade that bound the sunset to its crimson glow, and then the violet dark, as it melted downwards to embrace the earth. We were both silent, Starwood from habit (I have never seen such power of abstraction), I by choice. An agitated knock came suddenly, about nine, and into the room bounced the big dog, tearing the carpet up with his capers. Seraphael followed, silent at first as we; he stole after us to the window, and looked softly forth. I could tell even in the uncertain silver darkness of that thinnest shell of a moon, that his face was alight with happiness, an ineffable gentleness—not the dread alien air of heaven—soothing the passion of his countenance. He laid for long his tiny hand upon my shoulder, his arm crept round my neck, and drawing closer still, he sighed rather than said, after a thrilling pause—

“Carlomein, wilt thou come into my room? I have a secret for thee; it will not take long to tell.”

“The longer the better, Sir.”

We went out through the dark drawing-room, we came to his writing-chamber; here the white sheets shone like ghosts in the bluish-blackness, for we were behind the sunset.

“We will have no candles, because we shall return so soon. And I love secrets told in the dark, or between the dark and light. I have prevented that child from taking her own way. It was very naughty, and I want to be shriven. Shrive me, Charles.”

“In all good part, Sir, instantly.”

“I have been quarrelling with the manager. He was very angry, and his whiskers stood out like the bristles of a cat, for I had snatched the mouse from under his paw, you see.”

“The mouse must have been glad enough to get away, Sir. And you have drawn a line through her engagement? She has told me something of it, and we are grateful.”

“I have cancelled her engagement! Well, this one—but I am going to give her another. She does not know it, but she will sing for me at another time. Art thou angry, Carl? Thou art rather a dread confessor.”

“I could not do anything but rejoice, Sir. How little she expects to bear such a part. She alone is fitted for it; an

angel, if he came into her heart, could not find one stain upon his habitation."

"The reason you take home to you, then, Carlomein?"

"Sir, I imagine that you consider her wanting in dramatic power, or that as a dramatic songstress under the present dispensation, she would but disappoint herself, and perhaps ourselves. Or that she is too delicately organised, which is no new notion to me."

"All of these reasons, and yet not one. Not even because, Carlomein, in all my efforts I have not written directly for the stage, nor because a lingering recollection ever forbids profane endeavour. There is yet a reason, obvious to myself, but which I can scarcely make clear to you. Though I would have you know, and learn as truth, that there is nothing I take from this child I will not restore to her again; nor shall she have the lesson to be taught to feel, that in heaven alone is happiness."

He made a long, long pause; I was in no mood to reply, and it was not until I was ashamed of my own silence that I spoke; then my own accents startled me. I told Seraphael I must return on the morrow to my own place if I were to enjoy at length what Miss Lawrence had set before me. He replied, that I must come back to him when I came, and that he would write to me meantime.

"If I can, Carlomein; but I cannot always write, even, my child, to thee. There is one thing more between us, a little end of business."

He lit with a waxen match a waxen taper, which was coiled into a brazen cup—he brought it from the mantelshelf to the table—he took a slip of paper and a pen. The tiny flame threw out his hand, of a brilliant ivory, while his head remained in flickering shadow—I could trace a shadow-smile.

"Now, Carlomein, this brother of yours. His name is David, I think?"

"Lenhart Davy, Sir."

"Has he many musical friends?"

"Only his wife, particularly so—the class are all neophytes."

"Well, he can do as he pleases. Here is an order."

He held out the paper in a regal attitude, and in the other hand brought near the tremulous taper, that I so might read. It was—"Abbey Choir, Westminster. Admit Mr. Lenhart Davy and party. 21st June. Seraphael." I could say nothing, nor even essay to thank him; indeed he would not permit it as I could perceive. We returned directly to the

drawing-room, and roused Starwood from a blue study, as the Chevalier expressed it.

"I am ready, and Miss Lemark is tired of waiting for both of us," said Miss Lawrence, as she entered, that crown of days, the studio. "I have left her in the drawing-room, and, by the way, though it is nothing to the purpose, she has dressed herself very prettily."

"I do not think it is nothing to the purpose—people dress to go to church, and why not, then, to honour music? You have certainly succeeded also, Miss Lawrence, if it is not impertinent that I say so."

"It is not impertinent. You will draw out the colours of that bit of canvas, if you gaze so ardently."

It was not so easy to refrain. That morning the pictured presence had been restored to its easel, framed and ready for inspection. I had indeed lost myself in that contemplation; it was hard to tear myself from it even for the embrace of the reality. The border, dead gold, of great breadth and thickness, was studded thickly with raised bright stars, polished and glittering as points of steel. The effect thus seemed conserved and carried out where in general it abates. I cannot express the picture; it was finished to that high degree which conceals its own design, and mantles mechanism with pure suggestion. I turned at length and followed the paintress, my prospects more immediate rushed upon me.

Our party, small and select as the most seclusive spirit could ask for, consisted of Miss Lawrence and her father—a quiet but genuine amateur he—of Miss Lemark, whom my friend had included, without a question, with Starwood and myself. We had met at Miss Lawrence's, and went together in her carriage. She wore a deep blue muslin dress, blue as that summer heaven; her scarf was gossamer, the hue of the yellow butterfly, and her bonnet was crested with feathers drooping like golden hair. Laura was just in white; her Leghorn hat lined with grass-green gauze; a green silk scarf waved around her. Both ladies carried flowers. Geraniums and July's proud roses were in Miss Lawrence's careless hand, and Laura's bouquet was of myrtle and yellow jessamine.

We drove in that quiet mood which best prepares the heart. We passed so street by street, until at length, and long before we reached it, the grey Abbey towers beckoned us from beyond the

houses, seeming to grow distant as we approached, as shapes of unstable shadow, rather than time-fast masonry.

Into the precinct we passed; we stayed at the mist-hung door. It was the strangest feeling—mere physical sensation—to enter, from that searching heat, those hot blue heavens, into the cool, the dream of dimness, where the shady marbles clustered, and the foot fell dead and awfully, where hints more awful pondered, and for our coming waited. Yea, as if from far and very far, as if beyond the grave descending, fell wondrous unwonted echoes from the tuning choir unseen. Involuntarily we paused to listen, and many others paused; those of the quick hand or melodious forehead, those of the alien aspect who ever draw after music. Now the strings yearned fitfully, a sea of softest dissonances; the wind awoke and moaned; the drum detonated and was still; past all the organ swept, a thundering calm.

Entering, still hushed and awful, the centre of the nave, we caught sight of the transept already crowded with hungering, thirsting faces; still they too, and all there hushed and awful. The vision of the choir itself, as it is still preserved to me, is as a picture of heaven to infancy. What more like one's idea of heaven than that height, that aspiring form?—the arches whose sun-kissed summits glowed in distance, whose vista stretched its boundaries from the light of rainbows at one end, on the other to the organ, music's archetype? Not less powerful—predominating—this idea of our other home, because no earthly flowers nor withering garlands made the thoughts recoil on death and destiny. The only flowers there, the rays transfused through sun-pierced windows; the blue mist strewn aisle and wreathing arch, the only garlands. Nor less because for once an assembly gathered of all the fraternities of music, had the unmixed element of pure enthusiasm thrilling through the "electric chain" from heart to heart. Below the organ stood Seraphael's desk, as yet unhaunted; the orchestra; the chorus, as a cloud-hung company, with star-like faces in the lofty front.

I knew not much about London orchestras, and was taking a particular stare, when Miss Lawrence whispered in a manner that only aroused, not disturbed me—"There is our old friend Santonio. Do look and see how little he is altered." I caught his countenance instantly—as fine, as handsome, a little worn at its edges, but rather refined by that process than otherwise. "I did not ask about him, because I did not know he

was in London. He is then settled here, and is he very popular?"

"You need not ask the question; he is too true to himself. No, Santonio will never be rich, though he is certainly not poor."

Then she pointed to me one head and another crowned with fame, but I could only spare for them a glance; Santonio interested me still. He was reminding me especially of himself as I remembered him, by laying his head as he had used to do upon the only thing he ever really loved—his violin—when, so quietly as to take us by surprise, Seraphael entered, I may almost say rose upon us, as some new-sprung star or sun.

Down the nave the welcome rolled, across the transept it overflowed the echoes; for a few moments nothing else could be felt, but there was, as it were, a tender shadow upon the very reverberating jubilation—it was subdued, as only the musical subdued their proud emotions—it was subdued for the sake of one whose beauty, lifted over us, appeared descending, hovering from some late-left heaven, ready to depart again, but not without a sign, for which we waited. Immediately, and while he yet stood with his eyes of power upon the whole front of faces, the solo-singers entered also and took their seats all calmly.

There were others besides Clara, but besides her I saw nothing, except that they were in colours while she wore black, as ever; but never had I really known her loveliness until it shone in contrast with that which was not so lovely. More I could not perceive, for now the entering bar of silence riveted; we held our breath for the coming of the overture.

It opened like the first dawn of lightning, yet scarce yet lightened morning; its vast subject introduced with strings alone in that joyous key which so often served him, yet as in the extreme of vaulting distance; but soon the first trombone blazed out, the second and third responding with their stupendous tones, as the amplifications of fugue involved and spread themselves more and more; until, like glory filling up and flooding the height of heaven from the heaven of heavens itself, broke in the organ, and brimmed the brain with the calm of an utter and forceful expression, realised by tone. In sympathy with each instrument, it was alike with none, even as the white and boundless ray of which all beams, all colour-tones, are born. The perfect form, the distinct conception of this unbrothered work, left our spirits as the sublime fulfilment confronted them. For once had genius, upon the wings

of aspiration that alone are pure, found all it rose to seek, and mastered without a struggle all that it desired to embrace; for the pervading purpose of that creation was the passionate quietude with which it wrought its way. The vibrating harmonies pulse-like, clung to our pulses, then drew up, drew out each heart, deep-beating and undistracted, to adore at the throne above from whence all beauty springs. And opening and spreading thus, too intricately, too transcendently for criticism, we do not essay, even feebly, to portray that immortal work of a music-veiled immortal.

Inextricable holiness, precious as the old Hebrew psalm of all that hath life and breath, exhaled from every modulation, each dropped celestial fragrances, the freshness of everlasting spring. Suggestive—our oratorio suggested nothing here, nothing that we find or feel—all that we seek and yearn to clasp, but rest in our restlessness to discover is beyond us! In nothing that form of music reminded of our forms of worship—in the day of paradise it might have been dreamed of, an antepast of earth's last night, and of eternity at hand—or it might be the dream of heaven that haunts the loving one's last slumber.

I can no more describe the hush that hung above and seemed to spiritualise the listeners, until, like a very cloud of mingling souls, they seemed congregated to wait for the coming of a Messiah who had left them long, promising to return. Nor how, as chorus after chorus, built up, sustained, and self-supported, gathered to the stricken brain, the cloud of spirits sank, as in slumber sweeter than any dreamful stir, upon the alternating strains and songs, all softness—all dread soothing, as the fire that burned upon the strings seemed suddenly quenched in tears. Faint supplications wafted now, now deep acclaims of joy, but all, all surcharged the spirit alike with the mysterious thrall and tenderness of that uncreate and unpronounceable Name, whose eternal love is all we need to assure us of eternal life.

It was with one of those alternate strains that Clara rose to sing, amidst silence yet unbroken, and the more impressive because of the midler symphony that stole from the violoncello, its meandering pathos asking to support and serve her voice. Herself penetrated so deeply with the wisdom of genius, she failed to remind us of herself; even her soft brow and violet eyes, violet in the dense glory of the Abbey afternoon light, were but as outward signs and vivid shadows of the spirit that touched her voice. Deeper, stiller than the violoncello notes,

hers seemed as those articulated, surcharged with a revelation beyond all sound.

Calm as deep, clear as still, they were yet not passionless; though they clung and moulded themselves strictly to the passion of the music, lent not a pulse of their own; nor disturbed it the rapt serenity of her singing, to gaze upon her angel-face. No child could have seemed less sensitive to the surrounding throng, nor have confided more implicitly in the father of its heart, than she leaned upon Seraphael's power.

I made this observation afterwards, when I had time to think—at present I could only feel, and feeling know, that the intellect is but the servant of the soul. When at length those two hours, concentrating such an eternity in their perfection of all sensation, had reached their climax; or rather when, brightening into the final chorus, unimprisoned harmonies burst down from stormy-hearted organ, from strings all shivering alike, from blasting, rending tubes—and thus bound fast the Alleluia—it was as if the multitude had sunk upon their knees, so profound was the passion-cradling calm. The blue-golden lustre, dim and tremulous, still crowned the unwavering arches—tender and overwrought was laid that vast and fluctuating mind. So many tears are not often shed as fell in that silent while, dew-stilly they dropped and quickened, but still not all had wept.

Many wept then who had never wept before—many who had wept before could not weep now—among them, I. Our party were as if lost to me; as I hid my face, my companion did not disturb me, she was too far herself in my own case. I do not know whether I heard, but I was aware of a stretching and breathing; the old bones stirring underneath the pavement would have shaken me less, but could not have been less to my liking; the rush however soft, the rustle however subdued, were agony—were torment; I could only feel, “Oh that I were in heaven! that I might never return to earth!” but then it came upon me, to that end we must all be changed. This was sad, but of a sadness peculiarly soothing; for could we be content to remain for ever as we are here, even in our holiest our strongest moments?

During the last reverberations of that unimaginable Alleluia, I had not looked up at all; now I forced myself to do so, lest I should lose my sight of *him*, his seal upon all that glory. As Seraphael had risen to depart, the applause, stifled and trembling, but not the less by heartfuls, rose for him.

He turned his face a moment, the heavenly half-smile was there; then, at that very moment, the summer sun, that falling downwards in its piercing glare, glowed gorgeous against the flower-leaf windows, flung its burning bloom, its flushing gold, upon that countenance. We all saw it, we all felt it, the seraph strength, the mortal beauty—and that it was pale as the cheek of the quick and living changed in death—that his mien was of no earthly triumph!

CHAPTER XLVI

To that last phase of an unworldly morning succeeded the usual contrasts both of state and mood. Pushing out, all among the marbles in a graceless disorder, finding in the sacred gloom of the precinct the flashing carriages, the crested panels; a rattle, a real noise, real things, real people; these were as one might expect, and yet I was very ungrateful; for I desired especially to avoid my dear brother and dearest sister, who had come from the country that very day, though I yet had failed to recognise or seek for them. Davy could generally express what he *felt* about music, and I did not know how it might be.

I was thankful to be with Miss Lawrence, who behaved exactly as I wished; that is to say, when we were fairly seated, she began to talk to her father, not to me, and upon indifferent or adverse matters. Of Laura I had not even thought until now. She was upon my side, though not just next me; she leaned back, and was so slight, that nothing could be seen of her, except her crushed up dress. While, as an amusing point of idiosyncrasy, I may remark that Miss Lawrence's dress was as superb as ever; she also carried her flowers, not one decayed. Laura had lost hers altogether.

Poor Starwood had closed his eyes, and was pretending to be asleep; he had one of those headaches of his that rendered silence a necessity, although they are "only nervous," and do not signify in the least. I had no headache; I never was better in my life, and I never felt so forcibly how much life is beyond *living*.

We drove home soon enough; I was Miss Lawrence's guest, and I knew that with her generous goodness she had invited Millicent and Davy. We had scarcely entered the drawing-room, where everything was utterly unreal to me, before Davy's little quick knock came.

Miss Lawrence then approached me, and putting her bonnet quite over my face, said, in a knowing whisper—

“You just go along upstairs; I know you cannot bear it. I am not made quite of your stuff, and shall be happy to entertain your people. Your brother and sister are no such awful persons to me, I assure you.”

I obeyed—perhaps selfishly—but I should have been poor company, indeed; and went to my large bedroom. Large and luxuriously furnished, it even looked romantic. I liked it; I passed to the window, and was disturbed a moment afterwards by a servant who bore a tray of eatables with wine, sent by Miss Lawrence, of course, whose moments counted themselves out in deeds of kindness. I took the tray, delivered it to the charge of the first chair next the door, and returned to my own at the window-seat.

The blue sky, so intense and clear, so deep-piercing, was all I needed to gaze on! and I was far gone in reverie when I heard a knock at the door of my room. It was a strange, short beat, almost as weird as “Jeffrey,” but at least it startled me to rise. I arose, and opened it. I beheld Laura. I was scarcely surprised; yet I should indeed have been surprised but for my immediate terror, almost awe, at her unformal aspect.

I never saw a living creature look so far like death. There was no gleam of life in her wan face, so fallen, agonised; no mortal, spending sickness, could have so reduced her! She fixed upon me her wild eyes, clear as tearless; but at first she could not speak. She tried again and again, but at last she staggered, and I put her, I know not how, exactly, into a chair at hand. She was light almost as a child of five years old, but so listless that I was afraid of hurting her; and immediately she sat down she fainted. It was a real unmitigated faint, and no mistake; I could see she had not herself expected it. I was accustomed to this kind of thing, however, for Lydia at home was fond of fainting away in church, or on the threshold of the door; also Fred’s wife made a point of fainting at regular intervals. But I never saw any one faint as Laura; she turned to marble in a moment; there was a rigid fixing of her features that would have alarmed me had I loved her, and that rendered my very anxiety for her a grief. I could not lift her then, for light as she was she leaned upon me, and I could only stretch my arm to reach the decanter from its stand. The wine was, however, of no use at present; I had to put the glass upon the floor after filling it with unmentionable exertion;

but after ten minutes or so, as I expected from a relaxation of her countenance, she awoke as out of a breathless sleep. She looked at me, up into my face—she was again the little Laura, whom I had known at Davy's class.

"I only wanted to ask you to let me lie upon your bed, for I am going back to-night, and have not a room here; and I did not like to ask Miss Lawrence. I hope you do not mind it. I should not have done so, if I had not felt so very ill."

The humility of her manner here, so unlike what I had seen in the little I had seen of her, made me ashamed, and it also touched me seriously. I said I was sorry, very sorry, that she should be ill; but that it was what any very delicate or feeling person might expect after so much excitement. And as I spoke, I would have assisted her, but she assisted herself, and lay down upon the bed directly.

"If you please, sit in the window away from me, and go on with your thoughts. Do not trouble yourself about me, or I shall go away again."

"I will keep quiet, certainly, because you yourself should keep so."

And then I gave her the wine, and covered her with the quilt to the throat; for although it was so warm, she had begun to shake and tremble as she lay. I held the wine to her lips, for she could not hold the glass; and while I did so, before she tasted, she said, with an emphasis I am very unlikely ever to forget—

"I wish it could be poison."

I saw there was something the matter then, and as being responsible at that instant, I mechanically uttered the reply—

"Will you not tell me why you wish it? I *can* mix poison; but I should be very sorry to give it to any one, and above all to you."

"Why to *me*? You would be doing more good than by going to hear all that music."

I gazed at her for one moment—a suspicion (which had it been a certainty would have failed to turn me from her) thwarted my simple pity. I gazed, and it was enough; I felt there was nothing I needed fear to know—that child had never sinned against her soul. I therefore said, more carelessly than just then I felt—

"Miss Lemark, because you are gifted—because you are good—because you are innocent. It is not everybody who is either of these, and very few indeed are all the three. I will

not have you talk just now, unless, indeed, you can tell me that I can do nothing for you. You know how slight my resources are, but you need not fear to trust me."

"If you did let me talk, what should I say? But you have told a lie, or rather, I made you tell it. I am *not* gifted; at least my gifts are such as nobody really cares for. I am innocent? I am *not* innocent; and for the other word you used, I do not think I ought to speak it; it no more belongs to me than beauty, or than happiness."

"All that is beautiful belongs to all who love it, thank God! Miss Lemark, or I should be very poor, indeed, in that respect. But why are you so angry with yourself, because, having gone through too much happiness, you are no longer happy? It must be so for all of us, and I do not regret, though I have felt it."

"You regret it—you to regret anything!" said Laura, haughtily, her hauteur striking through her paleness reproachfully. "You—a man! I would sell my soul, if I have a soul, to be a man, to be able to live to myself, to be delivered from the torment of being and feeling what nobody cares for."

"If we live to ourselves, we men, if I may call myself a man, we are not less tormented, and not less because men are expected to bear up, and may not give themselves relief in softer sorrow. My dear Miss Lemark, it appears to me, that if we allow ourselves to sink, either for grief or joy, it matters not which, we are very much to blame, and more to be pitied. There is ever a hope, even for the hopeless, as they think themselves, how much more for those who need not and must not despair! And those who are born with the most hopeful temper, find that they cannot exist without faith."

"That is the way the people always talk who have everything the world can give them—who have more than everything they wish for—who have all their love cared for—who may express it without being mocked, and worshipped without being trampled on. You are the most enviable person in the whole world, except one, and I do not envy her, but I do envy you."

"Very amiable, Miss Lemark!" and I felt my old wrath rising, yet smiled it down. "You see all this is a conjecture on your part; you cannot know what I feel, nor is it for you to say that because I am a man I can have exactly what I please. Very possibly, precisely because I am a man, I cannot."

But anyhow I shall not betray myself, nor is it ever safe to betray ourselves, unless we cannot help it."

"I do not care about betraying myself; I am miserable, and I *will* have comfort—comfort is for the miserable!"

"Not the comfort a human heart can bring you, however soft it may chance to be."

"I should hate a soft heart's comfort; I would not take it. It is because you are not soft-hearted I want yours."

"I would willingly bestow it upon you if I knew how; but you know that Keble says, 'Whom oil and balsams kill, what salve can cure?'"

"I do not know Keble."

"Then you ought to cultivate his acquaintance, Miss Lemark, as a poet, at least, if not as a gentleman."

I wished at once to twist the subject aside, and to make her laugh; a laugh dispels more mental trouble than any tears at times. But, contrary to expectation on my part, my recipe failed here; she broke into a tremendous weeping, without warning; nor did she hide her face, as those for the most part do who must shed their tears; she sobbed openly, aloud; and yet her sorrow did not inspire me with contempt, for it was as unsophisticated as any child's; it was evident she had not been accustomed to suffering, and knew not how to restrain its expression, neither that it ought to be restrained. I moved a few feet from her, and waited; I did right—in the rain the storm exhaled. She wiped away her tears, but they yet pearled the long pale lashes as she resumed—

"I am much obliged to you for telling me I ought not to say these things, but it would be better if you could prevent my feeling them."

"No one can prevent that, Miss Lemark, and perhaps it does not signify what you feel, if you can prevent its interfering with your duty to others and to yourself."

"You, to talk of duty! You, who possess every delight that the earth contains, and with whom I would rather change places than with the angels."

"I have many delights; but if I had no duties to myself, the delights would fail. An artist, I consider, Miss Lemark, has the especial duty imposed upon him or her, to let it be seen that art is the nearest thing in the universe to God, after nature, and his life must be tolerably pure for that."

"That is just it. But it is easy enough to do right when

you have all that your heart wants and your mind asks for I have nothing."

"Miss Lemark, you are an artist."

"You know very well how you despise such art as mine, even if I did my duty by that; but I do not, and that is what I want comfort for; you did not think I should tell you anything else!"

"I would have you tell me nothing that you are not obliged to say; it is dangerous, at least I should find it so."

"You have not suffered; or if you have, you have never offended. I have done what would make you spurn me; but that would not matter to me; anything is better than to seem what I am not."

"What is the matter, then? I never spurned a living creature, God knows; and for every feeling of antipathy to some persons, I have felt a proportionate wish for their good. There are different ranks of spirits, Miss Lemark, and it is not because we are in one that we do not sympathise quite as much as is necessary with the rest. Albeit, you and I are of one creed, you know—both artists, and both, I believe, desirous to serve art as we best may; thus we meet on equal grounds, and whatever you say I shall hear as if it were my sister who spoke to me."

"If you meant that, it would be very kind, for I have no brother; I have none of my blood, and I can expect no one else to love me. I do not care to be loved even; but every one must grow to something. You know Clara? I see you do; you always felt for her as you could not help. No one could feel for her as she deserves. I wish I could die for Clara, and now I cannot die even for myself. For I feel—oh! I feel, that to die is not to die—that music made me feel it, but I have never felt it before—I have been a heathen. I cannot say I wish I had not heard it, for anything is better than to be so shut out as I was. You remember how, when I was a little girl, I loved to dance; I always liked it until I grew up, but I cannot tell you how at last, when I came out in Paris, and after the few first nights—which were most beautiful to me—I wearied. Night after night in the same steps to the same music—music—is it music? you do not look as if you called it so. I did not know I danced—I dreamed; I am not sure now sometimes, that I was ever awake those nights. I was lazy and grew indolent, and when Clara came to Paris, I went along with her. Would you believe it? I have done nothing ever

since." She paused a long minute; I did not reply. "You are not shocked?"

"No, I think not."

"You don't scorn me, and point your face at me? Then you ought, for I lived upon her and by her, and made no effort, while she took no rest, working hard and always. But with it all she kept her health, like the angels in heaven, and I grew ill and weak. I could not dance then. I felt it to be impossible, though sometimes it came upon me that I could; and then the remembrance of those nights, all alike, night after night—I could not. Pray tell me now whether I am not worthless. But I have no beauty; I am lost."

"Miss Lemark, if you were really lost, and had no beauty, it appears to me that you would not complain about it; people do not, I assure you, who are ugly or in despair. You are overdone, and you overrate your little girlish follies; everything is touched by the colour of your thoughts, but is not really what it seems. Believe me—as I cannot but believe—that your inaction arose from morbid feeling, and not too strong health; not from true want of energy or courage. You are young, a great deal too young to trust all you fancy, or even feel; and you ought to be thankful there is nothing more for you to regret than that weighing down your spirit. You will do everything we expect and wish when you become stronger—a strong woman, I hope—for remember you are only a girl. Nor will you find that you are less likely to succeed then because of this little voluntary of *idlesse*."

"You are only speaking so because it is troublesome to you to be addressed at all. You do not mean it; you are all music."

"There is only one who is all music, Miss Lemark."

"She hid her face for many minutes; at last she looked up, and said with more softness, a smile almost sweet—

"Mr. Auchester, I feel I am detaining you; let me beg you to sit down."

I just got up on the side of the bed.

"That will do beautifully. And now, Miss Lemark, if I am to be your doctor, you must go to sleep."

"Because I shall not talk? But I will not go to sleep, and I will talk. What should you do if you were in my place, feeling as I do?"

"I do not know all."

"You may if you like."

"Then I may guess; at least I may imagine all that I might feel if I were in your place—a delicate young lady who has been fainting for the love of music."

"You are sneering; I do not mind that. I have seen such an expression upon a face I admire more than yours. Suppose you felt you had seen——"

"What I could never forget, nor cease to love," I answered, fast and eagerly; I *could* not let her say it, or anything just there—"I should earnestly learn his nature, should fill myself to the brim with his beauty, just as with his music. I should feel that, in keeping my heart pure, above all from envy, and my life most like his life, I should be approaching nearer than any earthly tie could lead me; should become worthy of his celestial communion, of his immortal, his heavenly tendencies. Nor should I regret to suffer—to suffer for his sake."

I used these last words—themselves so well remembered!—without remembering who said them for me first till I had fairly spoken; then I, too, longed to weep; Maria's voice was trembling in my brain, a ghostly music. As Laura answered, the ghostly music passed, even as a wind shaken and scattered upon the sea—it was earth again, as vague, scarcely less lonely!

"A worldly man would mock. You do not a much wiser thing, but you do it for the best. I will try to hide it for ever; for there is, indeed, no hope."

Half imploring, this was hardly a question; yet I answered—"I do believe none."

"You are cold—not cruel. I would rather know the truth. Yes! I would hide it for ever; I will not even speak of it to you."

"Even from yourself hide it, if it must be hidden at all. And yet I always think that a hidden sorrow is the best companion we can have."

"I am very selfish. I know that if Miss Lawrence finds out I am with you, you will not like it. You had better let me go downstairs."

"I will go myself, if you prefer to be alone; but you must not move."

"I must move—I will not be found here; I had quite forgotten that. I will go this moment."

I did not dream of her actually departing; but before I could remonstrate further, she had planted herself lightly upon the carpet, and looked as well as usual: it was nothing extra-

ordinary to see her pale. She smoothed her long hair at my glass, and arranged her dress: she shook hands with me afterwards, also, and then she left the room.

CHAPTER XLVII

I WAS really alone now, but had a variety of worrying thoughts, hunting each other to death, but reproducing each other by thousands. I was irate with Laura, though I felt very sad; but of all most vexed that such an incident should have befallen my experience that crown of days. The awful power of a single soul struggled in my apprehension with the vain weakness of a single heart. But more overpowering than either was the sensation connecting the two. It was a remembrance that I, too, might be called to suffer.

At last Miss Lawrence sent to know whether I chose my dinner. Her own hour was six, and just at hand; but I felt so extremely disinclined to eat that I thought I would refuse, and take a walk, another way. Miss Lawrence was one of those persons—gladdening souls are they!—who mean exactly what they say, and expect you to say exactly what you mean: thus I had no difficulty in explaining that I preferred to take this walk; though it was not, after all, a walk *semplique*, for I was bound to the cottage, and desired to reach it as soon as possible.

I met Miss Lawrence on the stairs, and she charged me to take care of Laura. I could not refuse, of course; and we drove in one of those delightful cabs that so effectually debar from connected conversation. I was glad for once, though I need not have troubled myself to descant; for Laura, in a great green veil, opened not her lips twice, nor once looked towards me.

We dismissed the conveyance at the entrance of the hamlet, and walked up together, still silent. It was about half-past seven then, and vivid as at morning the atmosphere, if not the light. Unclouded sunshine swept the clustered leaves of the intense June foliage, heavy-tressed laburnum wore it instead of blossoms; but from the secluded shade of the wayside gardens pierced the universal scent of roses, above all other fragrance except the limes, which hung their golden bells out here and there, dropping their singular perfume all lights alike.

I saw Seraphael's house first, and returned to it after leaving Laura at that other white gate. All our windows were open—the breeze blew over a desert of flowers—all was “fairy-land forlorn.” I felt certain no one could be at home. I was right here. I could not enter. I was drawn to that other gate—I entered. Thoné opened the door, looking quite as eastern in the western beams.

“Is Miss Benette at home?”

“I will see.” For Thoné could spell out a little English now. She went and saw.

“Yes, Sir, to you; and she wishes to see you.”

It was the first time Thoné had ever called me Sir, and I felt very grand. A strange, subtle fancy, sweeter than the sweetest hope, sprang daringly within me. But a crushing fear uprose, it swelled and darkened—my butterfly was broken upon that wheel—those rooms so bright and festal, the air and sunshine falling upon clustered flowers, upon evening freshness as at morning—were not, could not be, for me! I advanced to the open piano, its glittering sheets outspread—its smiling keys.

Hardly had I felt myself alone before one other entered: alas! I was still alone! Clara herself approached me, less calm than I had ever seen her; her little hand was chilled as if by the rough kisses of an eastern wind, though the south air fanned our summer; there was agitation in her whole air, but more excitement. I had never seen her excited; I had not been aware how strangely I should feel to see her touched so deeply.

“Mr. Auchester, it must have been heaven who sent you here to-night, for I wanted to see you more than anybody, and was expecting some one else. I never thought I should see you first: I wished it so very much.”

“Miss Benette, if it were in my power I would give you all you wish, for the sake only of hearing you wish but once. I am grateful to be able to fulfil your wishes in the very least degree. What is it now?”—for her lip quivered like an infant's, and one tear stood in each of her blue eyes. She wiped away those dew-drops that I would have caught upon my heart; and answered, her voice of music all quiet now—

“I have had a strange letter from the gentleman you love so well. I do not feel equal to what he asks—that is, I am not deserving; but still I must answer it: and after what you said to me last time you were so kind as to talk to me, I do not think it right to overlook it.”

“I may not see the letter? I do not desire it; but suffer me

to understand clearly what it is about exactly, if you do not think me too young, Miss Benette? ”

“ Sir, I always feel as if you were older, and I rely upon you. I will do as you please; I wish to do so only. This letter is to ask me to marry him. Oh! how differently I felt when I was asked to marry Mr. Davy! ”

“ Yes, I rather suppose so. You are ready to reply? ”

“ Not quite. I had not considered such a thing, and should have thought first of marrying a king or an angel.”

“ He is above all kings, Miss Benette; and if he loves you, no angel’s happiness could be like your own. But is it so wholly unexpected? ”

“ I never imagined it, Sir, for one single moment; nor could any woman think he would prefer her. Of course, as he is above all others, he has only to choose where he pleases.”

I could not look at her as she spoke; I dared not trust myself—the most thrilling irony pointed her delicate lovesome tones. I know not that she knew it, but I did; it cut me far deeper than to the heart, and through and through my spirit the wound made way. No tampering, however, with “oil and balsams ” here!

“ Wherever he pleases, I should say. No one he could choose could fail (I should imagine) in pleasing him to please herself.”

She retorted, more tenderly. “ I think it awful to remember that I may not be worthy, that I may make him less happy than he now is, instead of more so.”

“ Only love him! ”

“ But such a great difference! He will not always walk upon the earth. I cannot be with him when he is up so high.”

“ I only say the same. He needs a companion for his earthly hours; then only is it he is alone. His hours of elevation require no sympathy to fill them; they are not solitude.”

“ I will do as you please, Sir; for it must be right. Do you not wish you were in my place? ” She smiled softly upon me, just lifting her lovely eyes.

“ Miss Benette, I know no one but yourself who could fill those hours I spoke of, nor any one but that beloved and glorious one who is worthy to fill your heart *all* hours. More I cannot say, for the whole affair has taken me by surprise.”

I had indeed been stricken by shock upon shock that day; but the last remained to me, when the wailings of misfortune, the echoes of my bosom-music, alike had left my brain. I

could not speak, and we both sat silent, side by side, until the sun in setting streamed into the room. Then, as I rose to lower the blind, and was absent from her at the window, I heard a knock—I had, or ought to have expected it; yet it turned me from head to foot—it thrilled me through and through. I well knew the hand that had raised the echoes like a salute of fairy cannon. I well knew the step that danced into the hall. I was gone through the open window, not even looking back. I ran to the bottom of the garden; I made for the Queen's highway; I walked straight back to London.

There was a great party in Miss Lawrence's, I knew it from the corner of the square; and I had to leave the lustrous darkness, the sleepy stars and great suffusing moonshine, the very streets filled full and overflowing with waftures of fragrances from the country, dim yet so delicious, for that terrible drawing-room. I took advantage of the excitement, however, that distressed me as it never burned before, to plunge instantly into a duet for violin and piano—Miss Lawrence calling me to her by the white spell of her waving hand the very moment I entered at the drawing-room door. My duet, her noble playing, made me myself, *as ever music saves her own*, and I conducted myself rather less like a nightmare than I felt. The party consisted of first-rate amateurs, the flower of the morning festival, both from orchestra and audience—all enchanted—all wordy—except my precious Davy, who was very pale, and Starwood, whose eyes almost went into his head with pain.

We all did our best, though. Starwood played most beautifully, and in a style which made me glory over him. Davy sang, though his voice was rather nervous. A great many people came up to me, but they got nothing out of me. I could not descant upon my religion. When at length they descended to supper—a miscellaneous meal, which Miss Lawrence always provided in great state—I thought I might be permitted to retire. Will it be believed that, half an hour afterwards, hearing my sister and Davy come up leisurely to bed, and peeping out to see them, I heard Millicent distinctly say, "I hope baby is asleep!" I was to return with them on the morrow, but directly after breakfast Miss Lawrence made me one of her signs, and led me thereby, without controlling me hand or foot, out of the breakfast-room. We were soon alone together in the studio.

"I thought you would like to be here this morning, for

Seraphael has promised to come and see it. I think myself that he will be rather surprised."

I could not help smiling at her tone, it was so unaffectedly satisfied.

"I should think he will, Miss Lawrence!"

"I don't mean as to the merits of the picture, but because he does not know it is—what shall I say?—historical—biographical—allegorical."

"You mean hieroglyphic?"

"Exactly."

"But he will not be likely to say anything about that part of it, will he? Is he not too modest or too proud?"

"Why, one never can know what he can say or do. I should not wonder the least in the world if he took the brushes up and put the eyes in, open."

I laughed—"Does he paint, though?"

"Between ourselves, Mr. Auchester, there is nothing he cannot do—no accomplishment in which he does not excel. He can paint, can design, can model, can harmonise all languages into a language of his own. All mysteries, all knowledge, all wisdom, we know too well—too well, indeed!—dwell with him, are of him. I am always afraid, when I consider these things. What a blessing to us and to all men if he would only marry! We should keep him a little longer, then."

"Do you think so? I am fearful it would make no real difference. There is a point where all sympathy ceases."

Miss Lawrence shook her head, a lull came over the animation of her manner—she hastened to arrange her scenery, now unique. She had placed before the picture a velvet screen, deep emerald and grass-like in its shade; this veil stood out alone, for she had cleared away all signs of picture, sketch, or other frame besides. Nothing was in the room but the picture on its lofty easel, and the loftier velvet shade. I appreciated to the full the artist tact of the veil itself, and said so.

"I think," was her reply, "it will be more likely to please him if I keep him waiting a little bit, and his curiosity is touched a moment."

And then we went downstairs. Davy, who always had occupation on hand, and would not have been destitute of duty on the shore of a desert island, was absent in the City; Millicent, who had taken her work to a window, was stitching the most delicate wristband in Europe, inside the heavy satin curtain, as

comfortably as in her tiny home. Miss Lawrence went and stood by her, entertained her enchantingly, eternally reminding her of her bliss by Mrs. Davy till I could but laugh—but still my honoured hostess was very impetuously excited, for her eyes sparkled as most eyes only light by candle-shine or the setting sun. She twisted the tassel of the blind, too, till I thought the silk cord would have snapped, but Millicent only looked up gratefully at her, without the slightest sign of astonishment or mystification.

“Charles!” exclaimed my sister at length, when Miss Lawrence, fairly exhausted with talking, was gathering up her gown into folds and extempore plaits—“Charles! you will be ready at two o’clock, and we shall get home to tea.”

I could not be angry with her for thinking of her baby—her little house—her heaven of home—but there was a going back to winter for me in the idea of going away. The music seemed dead, not slumbering, that I had heard the day before. But is this strange? For there is a slumber we call death. About half-past ten a footman fetched Miss Lawrence. She touched my arm, apologising to Millicent, though not explaining—and we left the room together. She sent me onwards to the studio, and went downstairs alone. I soon heard them coming up, indeed, I expected them directly, for Seraphael never waited for anything, and never lost a moment. They were talking, and when he entered he did not at first perceive me. His face was exquisite. A charm softened the Hebrew keenness, that was not awful, like the passion music stirring the hectic, or spreading its white light. He was flushed, but more as a child that has been playing until it is weary—his eyes, dilated, were of softer kindness than the brain gives birth to—his happy yet wayward smile, as if he rejoiced because self-willing to rejoice. His clear gaze—his eager footstep—reminded me of other days, when he trembled on the verge of manhood: it was, indeed, as a man, that he shone before me that morning, and had never shone before. They stood now before the screen, and I was astonished at the utter self-possession of the paintress; she only watched his face, and seemed to await his wishes.

“That screen is very beautiful velvet, and very beautifully made. Am I never to look at anything else? Is nothing hidden behind it? I have been very good, Miss Lawrence, and I waited very patiently. I do not think I can wait any longer. May I pull it away?”

“Sir, most certainly. It is for you to do so at your pleasure.

I am not afraid either, though you will think me not over-modest."

Seraphael touched the screen—it was massive, and resisted his little hand: he became impatient. Miss Lawrence only laughed, but I rushed out of my corner to help him. Before he looked at the picture, he gave me that little hand and a smile of his very own.

"Look, dearest Sir!" I cried; "pray look now!" And indeed he looked; and indeed I shall not forget it. It was so strange to turn from the living lineaments—the eye of the sun and starlight—the brilliant paleness—the changeful glow—the look of intense and concentrated vitality upon temple and lip and skin, to the still immortal visage—the aspect of glory beyond the grave—the lustre unearthly, but not of death, that struck from those breathless lips—those snow-sealed eyes. And, above all, to see that the light seemed not to descend from the crown upon the forehead, but to aspire from the forehead to the crown—so the rays were mixed and fused into the idea of that eternity in which there shall be a new earth besides another heaven! That transcending picture! how would it affect him? I little knew. For as he stood, and gazed, he grew more like it—the smile faded—the deep melancholy I had seldom seen, and never without a shudder, swept back—as the sun goes into a cloud, his face assumed a darklier paleness—he appeared to suffer, but did not speak. In some minutes still, he started, turned to Miss Lawrence, and sighing gently, as gently said, "I wish I were more like it! I wish I were as that is! But we may not dream dreams, though we may paint pictures. I should like to deserve your idea, but I do not at present. Happy for us all who build upon the future, as you have done in that painting! I mean, entirely, as to the perfection of the work."

"Have I your permission to keep it, Sir? "

"What else, Madam, would you do with it? "

"Oh, if you had not approved I should have slashed it into pieces with a carving knife, or my father's razor. I shall keep it, with your permission; it will be very valuable and precious, and I have to thank you for the inestimable privilege of possessing it."

This cool treatment of Miss Lawrence's delighted me—it was the only one to restore our Chevalier. He, indeed, returned unto his rest, for he left the house that moment. Nor could I have desired him to remain—there was only one presence in which I cared to imagine him. . . .

CHAPTER XLVIII

THE day had come and gone when Clara, for the first time, dressed in white. The sun-grain of August had kissed the corn, the golden-drooping sheaves waved through the land fresh cut, and the latest roses mixed pale amidst the lilies beneath the bounteous harvest-moon, when she left us—but not alone. It was like dying twice over to part with them once, and therefore it will not be believed how soon I could recover the farewell, and feed upon Clara's letters which never failed me once a month. For a year they more sustained me than anything else could have done; for they told of a life secluded as any who loved *him* could desire for him, and not more free from pain than care. Of herself she never spoke, except to breathe sweet wishes for her friends: but her whole soul seemed bent upon his existence, and her descriptions were almost a diary. I could not be astonished at her influence, for it had governed my best days; but that she should be able to secure such a boon to us as a year of unmitigated repose for him, was precisely what I had not anticipated, nor dared to expect. Meanwhile, and during that year, our work was harder than ever. Davy and I were quite unconscious of progressing, yet were perfectly happy, and as ever determined; indeed, nothing like a slight contumacy on the part of the pupils kept Davy up to the mark. From Starwood, who had returned to Germany, I also received accounts, but he was no letter-writer, except when there was anything very particular to say. He was still a student, and still under Seraphael's roof. Strange and Arabian dreams were those I had of that house, in the heart of a country so far away; for the Chevalier had moved nearer the Rhine, and nothing in his idiosyncrasy so betokened the Oriental tincture of his blood as his restless fondness for making many homes—while he was actually at home in none.

We lived very happily, as I said. It was, perhaps, not extraordinary that to my violin I grew more infinitely attached—was one with it, and could scarcely divide myself from it. I lived at home still, that is I slept at home, and usually ate there; but Davy's house was also home—it had grown dearer to me than ever, and was now fairer. The summer after our

friends had left us was brilliant as the last, and now the shell was almost hidden by the clinging of the loveliest creepers; the dahlias in the garden had given place to standard rose-trees, and though Carlotta could not reach them, she had learned to say, "rose!" and to put up her pretty hand for me to pluck her one. With a flower she would sit and play an entire morning, and we never had any trouble with her. Millicent worked and studied as conveniently as though she had never been born; for it was Davy's supreme wish to educate his daughter at home, and her mamma had very elaborate ideas of self-culture in anticipation. During that autumn we found ourselves making some slight way. Davy took it into his head to give utterance, for the first time, to a public concert; and I will not say I was myself averse. We had a great deal of conversation and a great many sessions on the subject, not exactly able to settle whether we would undertake a selection or some entire work. Our people were rather revived out of utter darkness concerning music, but its light was little diffused, and seemed condensed in our class-room as a focus. The band and chorus, of course, made great demonstrations in favour of the "Messiah;" and my mother, who had taken an extraordinary interest in the affair, said, innocently enough—

"Then why, my dears, not represent the 'Messiah?' It will be at Christmas time, and very suitable."

This was not the point, for Davy had reminded me of the fact that the festival for the approaching year at the centre of the town would open with that work; unless indeed the committee departed from their precedent on all former occasions. My idea would have been a performance all Bach, Beethoven, and Seraphael, with Handel's ode for a commencement, on the 22nd of November—but Davy shook his head at me—

"That would be for Germany, not for England;" and I obliged myself to believe him. At length we accepted the "Messiah," to the great delight of the chorus and band.

It was a pressing time all through that autumn. I do not suppose I ever thought of anything but fiddles, fiddles, fiddles, from morning till night. They edged my dreams with music, and sometimes with that which was very much the reverse of music; for we had our difficulties. Prejudice is best destroyed by passion, which as yet we had not kindled. Davy met with little support, and no sympathy, except from his own—this mattered little either, so long as his own were concerned, but

now, in prospect of our illustration, it was necessary to secure certain instrumental assistance.

I undertook to do this—besides my own strings we had brass and wind, but not sufficient. I shall not forget the difficulty of thawing the players I visited—I will not call them artists—into anything like genial participation. Their engagement was sufficiently formal, nor did they like me; I suppose they owed a grudge against my youth, for youth is unpardonable and inadmissible except in the case of genius. Neither did they thaw, any more than the weather, on Christmas Eve; it was on Christmas Eve we were to perform. It was an eve of ice, not snow—the blue sky silvery, the earth bound fast in sleep. We had hired a ball-room at the chief hotel, an elegant and rather rare room; it was warmed by three wide fire-places; and the crimson curtains closed, with the chairs instead of benches, gave a social and unusual charm to the whole proceeding.

If our audience entered aghast, looked frozen, rolled in furs and contempts, they could not help smiling upon the fires, the roseate glow, though they also could not help being disconcerted to find themselves treated all alike, for Davy would have no roseate seats, nor any exclusiveness on this occasion. As he intended, besides, to restore the work exactly as it was first written, we expected a little cold and a few black looks. No modern listeners can receive an oratorio as orthodox without an organ of Titan-build in the very middle that takes care to sound.

The overture, beautifully played, was taken down with chill politeness; but my own party were so pleased with themselves, and made such ecstatic motions with their features, that it was quite enough for me. The first chorus so lightly, delicately shown up, not extinguished by the orchestra; and, indeed, chorus after chorus found no more favour: still no one could help feeling the perfect training here. I knew as well as Davy, envy or pride alone kept back the free confession. The exquisite shading in the chorus, the public's darling—"Unto us a child is born," and the grandeur of the final effect, subdued them a little. They cheered, and Davy gave me a glance over his shoulder, which I understood to say, "One must come in for certain disadvantages if one is well received;" for Davy abhorred a noise as much as I did. When we waited between the parts, some one fetched Davy away in an immense hurry; he did not return immediately, and I grew alarmed. I peeped

into the concert-room, there sat Millicent most composedly, and Lydia with her lord, and Clo in her dove-coloured silk and spectacles, and my mother in her black satin and white kid gloves, looking crowned with happiness; it was evident that nothing was the matter at home. But having a few minutes, I went to speak to them, and then my mother, in her surmises about Davy, whom she loved as her own son—and Clo, whose principles were flattered, not shocked, in her approval—took up so much time that I was at last obliged to fly to my little band who were assembled again, and tuning by fits. Still Davy was not there. But presently, and just at the moment when it was necessary to begin, he appeared, so looking that I was sure either something very dread or very joyous had befallen him. His eye gazed brightly out to the whole room as he faced, instead of turning from it. He could not help smiling, and his voice quivered as he spoke. He said in those fond accents—

“I have the pleasure to announce that the Chevalier Seraphael, having just arrived from Germany on a visit to myself, has consented to conduct the Second Part himself.”

I had been sure the Chevalier was in him before he spoke, but I little thought how it would come about. Immediately he finished speaking, the curtain above us divided, and that heavenly-inspired one stood before us.

There was that in his apparition which stirred the slowest and burned upon the coldest pulses. All rose and shouted with an enthusiasm, when elicited from English hearts perhaps more real and touching than any other—a quickening change, like sudden summer, swept the room—the music became infinitely at home there, we all felt as if watching over the dead—we had seen the dead alive again—the “old familiar strains” untired us, and none either wearied among the listeners. I could not, in the trances of my own playing, forbear to worship the gentle knowledge that had led the hierarch to that humble shrine, to consecrate and ennoble it for ever. But the event told even sooner than I expected; for lo! at the end, when the Chevalier turned his kingly head, and bowed to the reiterated applaudings, and had passed out—those plaudits continued, and would not cease till Davy was recalled himself; the pent-up reverence, restored to its proper channel, eddied in streams around him.

What an evening we spent, or rather what a night we made that night! in the little parlour of Davy’s, the little green-

house thrown open, and lighted by Millicent with Carlotta's Christmas candles—the supper, where there was hardly room for us all at the table, and hardly room upon the table for all the good things my mother sent for from her pantry and larder and store-closet—the decoration of the house with green wreaths and holly-bunches, the swept and garnished air of the entire tiny premises standing us in such good stead to welcome the Christmas visitant with Christmas festivity; the punch Davy mixed in Carlotta's christening-bowl, my mother's present, she perfectly radiant and staring with satisfaction in the arm-chair, where Seraphael himself had placed her as we closed around the fire—the Christmas music never wanting, for, in the midst of our joyous talk a sudden celestial serenade, a deep-voiced carol, burst from beyond the garden, and looking out there we beheld, through rimed and frost-glazed windows, a clustered throng, whose voices were not uncultured—the warmest-hearted members of Davy's own. They were still singing when Carlotta awoke and cried, had to be brought downstairs, and was hushed listening in Seraphael's arms.

So, after all, we did not go to bed that night, for it was quite two o'clock when I escorted my mother and sisters home, having left the little room I usually occupied when I slept at my brother's house for Seraphael, whom no one would suffer to sleep at the hotel. I might remind myself of the next day, too, and I surely may: of our going to church together after a night of snow, over the sheeted white beneath a cloudless heaven—of our all sitting together in that large pew of ours, and the excitement prevailing among the congregation afterwards as they assured themselves of our guest—of the chimes swelling high from the tower as we returned, and my walk alone with Seraphael to show him where Clara's house had stood. When we were, indeed, alone together, I asked more especially after her, and listened to his tender voice when it told of her that she was not then strong enough to cross the sea; but that, though he could only leave her for a week, it was her latest request that he would come to see us all himself, nor return without having done so. And then he spoke of the affairs that had brought him over—an entreaty from the committee of our own town festival that he would direct that of the coming year, and compose exclusively for it.

It made me very indignant at first that they should have kept Davy so entirely in the dark as to their intentions, because he had been forewarned on all previous occasions, before his

influence was so strong in his own circle. But when I expressed a little my indignation, Seraphael only laughed, and said—

“It was what every one must expect who was such a purist, unless he would also condescend to amuse the people at times and seasons, or unless he were not *poor*.”

My obligation to accede here made me yet more indignant, until I remembered how Seraphael had introduced himself, and so taken Davy by the hand that it would not be likely for him ever again to be thrust back into obscurity afterwards, were it only because Seraphael himself was *rich*.

“And will you come to us, Sir?” I asked, scarcely able to frame a wish upon the subject.

“If I live, Carlomein. And I do hope to live, till then at least. I have also been rather idle lately, and must work. Indeed, I have brought nothing with me, except a psalm or two for your brother. We may write music to psalms, I suppose, Carlomein?”

“You may, Sir; and, indeed, anybody may; for whatever is worthless will be forgotten, and whatever is worthy will live for ever.”

“It is not that anything we offer can be worthy of the feet at which we lay it—it is not that anything is sweet or sufficient for our love’s expression! but every little word of love and smile of love is precious to us, and must be so to Love itself, I think. Only in music now does God reveal himself as in the days of old; and I do believe, Carlomein, that He dwelling not in temples made with hands, yet dwelleth there. I suppose it may be, that as we make the music that issues from the orchestra, or from the organ where all musics mingle, so He makes the love that religion burns to utter, but that music, for the musical, alone makes manifest. All worship is sacred, but that is unutterably holy. How holy should the heart of the musician be!”

“Dearest Sir, forgive me! If you had not spoken so I could not have presumed to ask you. But do you, therefore, object to write for the stage, in its present promiscuous position among the arts?”

“Carlomein, the drama is my greatest delight. The dramatic genius I would ever accept a guide and standard; but, from youth upwards, I have ever abstained from writing for the stage. It does not suit me; it is in some respects beyond me; that is, as it ought to exist. But my days are

numbered; I have lately known it; and to give forth opera after opera would reduce my short span to a mere holiday task. I am too happy, Carlomein, and to you I will say it—too blest—in that I feel I can best express what others left to me because expression failed them.”

“Oh, dearest Sir! it is so, and not alone in music, but in everything you touch or tell us! Yet you are ours for years and years. I feel it: there is so much to be done, and only you can do it; so much to learn, yet of what you can only teach us. You cannot, you will not, and are not going to leave us! I know it; I could not be so if I did not know and feel it. You are looking better than when even first I saw you—all those years ago.”

“I am well, Carlomein—I have never been ill. I do not know sickness, though I have known sorrow—thank God for that inexpressible mystery in which His light is hidden. But, Carlomein, you speak as if it were of all things the saddest thing to die! I know not that sensation; I believe it to be mere sensation. Neither is this earth a wilderness—no weariness! There is not an air of spring that does not make me long for death; the burdening gladness is too much for life, and summer and winter call me. Eternity without years is ever present with me, and the poor music they love so well, they love because it comes to me from beyond the grave.”

I could not hear him speak so; it killed me to all but a ravishment of fear. I could not help saying, though I fear it was out of place—

“There is one you must not leave; she cannot live without you.”

“Carlomein, any one can live who is to live, and whoever is decreed must die. There is no death for me. I do not call it so; nor do I believe that death could touch me. I mean I should not know it, for I could not bear it; and I fear it not, for nothing we cannot bear is given us to endure.”

“Sir, if I did not revere too much every word you utter, I should say that a morbid presentiment clouds your enthusiasm, and that you know not what you say.”

“Do I look morbid, Carlomein? That is an ugly word, and you deserve it as much as I do, pale-face!”

He laughed out joyously. I looked at him again. How his eyes radiated their splendours, as an eastern starlight in a northern sky! How the blossom-blushes rose upon his cheek!—health, joy, vitality, all the flowers of manhood, the fairest

laurels of an unsullied fame, shone visionary about him. He seemed no earthling "born to die." I could not but smile; still it was at his beauty, not his mirth.

"Sir, you don't look much like a martyr now."

"Carlomein, I should rather be a martyr than a saint. The saints are robed in glory, but the glory streams from heaven upon the martyr's face."—Oh, he could feel no pain, with that light there! I know he felt none.—"The saints wear lilies, or they dream so, and dream they not the martyrs wear the roses? have not the thorns pierced through them? They are thornless roses there, for passion is made perfect."

"Sir, but I do think that the musician, if duteous, is meet for a starry crown."

"And I could only think, when I saw that picture, that the crown was not mine own; but I dreamed within myself, that it should not be in vain I desire to deserve the crown which I should wear, but not that star-crown. Poetry may be forgiven for hiding sorrow in bliss, but it is only music that hides bliss with sorrow. And see, Carlomein, for we are in a tale of dreams just now, and both alone; there have been martyrs for all faiths—for love, for poetry, for patriotism, for religion—oh! for what cause where passion strikes and stirs has there not been martyrs! But I think music has not many, and those were discrowned of that glory by the other crown of Fame. Shall I die young, and not be believed to have died for music? for that end must the music be rapt and purified—stolen from itself; its pleasures must be strong to pain, its exercises sharper than agony. I know of none other choice for myself than to press forward to fulfil the call I have heard since music spoke to me, and was as the voice of God. There is so much to undo in very doing, while those who were not called, but have only chosen music, defile her mysteries—that the few who are called must surely witness for her. We will not speak again so, Carlomein. I have made your young face careful, and I would rather see scorn work upon it than such woe. I am now going to a shop; are there any shops here, Carlomein?"

"Plenty, Sir, but they are closed; still I am certain you can get anything you want, no matter what."

"I have something to make to-night which is most important, and I must have nuts, apples, and sugar-plums."

We went to a large confectioner's, whose windows were but semi-shuttered. Here the Chevalier quite lost himself in

the treasures of those glass magazines. I should scarcely have known him as he had been. He chose very selectly, nathless, securing only the most delicate and rare of the wonders spread about him, and which excited his *naïveté* to the utmost. His choice comprised all crisp white comfits and red-rose ones, almond-eggs, the most ravishing French bonbons, all sorts of chocolate, myriad sugar millions, like rain from fairy rainbows, twisted green angelica, golden strips of crystallised orange-peel, not to speak of rout-cakes, like fish, and frogs, and mice, and birds'-nests. Nor did these suffice: off we walked to the toy-shop. Our town was of world-renown for its toys. Here it was not so easy to affect an entrance; but it *was* effected the moment the Chevalier showed his face; to this hour I believe they took him in there for some extraordinary little boy—he certainly behaved like nothing else. He bought now beads all colours, and spangles and shining leaf, and of all things the most exquisite doll, small-featured, waxen, dressed already in long white robes, and lying in a cradle about a foot long, perfectly finished. And next, besides this baby's baby, he snatched at a box of letters, then at a gilt watch, and finally at a magic lantern. We so loaded ourselves with all these baubles that we could scarcely get along; for, with his wonted impetuosity on the least occasions, he would not suffer anything to be sent lest it should not arrive in time. And then, though I reminded him of the dinner hour at hand, there was to be no rest yet, but I must take him to some garden, or nursery of winter plants. Fortunately, a great friend of Davy's in that line lived very near him—for Davy was a great flower-fancier. This was convenient; for had it been two miles off, Seraphael would have run there, being in his uttermost wayward mood. We chose a gem of a fir-tree, and though both the florist and I remonstrated with our whole hearts, would carry it himself, happily not very far. I was reminded of dear old Aronach's story about his child-days, as I saw him clasp it in his delicate arms so nerved with power, and caught his brilliant face through the spires of the foliage. Thus we approached Davy's house, and I reminded the Chevalier that we were expected to dine at my mother's, not there. In fact, poor Millicent, in her bonnet, looked out anxiously from the door; the Chevalier called to her as she ran to open the gate—"See, Mrs. Davy, see! Here's 'Birnam Wood come to Dunsinane.' Make way!"

"You are very naughty," said Davy, stepping forth. "Our beloved mamma will be coming after us."

"It is very rude, I know; but I am going to dine with your daughter."

"My daughter is coming too. Did you think we should leave her behind?"

Millicent was about, in fact, to mount the stairs for the baby, but Seraphael rushed past her.

"Pardon! but I don't wish to be seen at present;" and we both bore our burdens into the parlour and laid them on the table.

"Now, Carlomein, the moment dinner is over, we two shall come back and lock ourselves in here."

"I should like it of all things, Sir, selfish wretch that I am! but I don't think they will."

"Oh, yes, I will make them!"

When at last we descended ready, Carlotta, in her white beaver bonnet, my own present, looked as soft as any snow-drop—too soft almost to be kissed. She held out her arms to Seraphael so very pertinaciously, that he was obliged to carry her; nor would he give her up until we reached my mother's door. It was quite the same at dinner also; she would sit next him, would stick her tiny fork into his face, with a morsel of turkey at the end of it, would poke crumbs into his mouth with her finger, would put up her lips to kiss him, would say, every moment, "I like you much-much!" with all Davy's earnestness, though with just so much of her mother's modesty as made her turn pink and shy, and put herself completely over her chair into Seraphael's lap, when he laughed at her. He was in ecstasies, and every now and then a shade so tender stole upon his air, that I knew he could only be adverting to the tenderest of all human probabilities—the dream of his next year's offspring.

After dinner, Miss was to retire. She was carried upstairs by Margareth, of whom I can only say she loved Carlotta better than she had loved Carl. Seraphael then arose, and gracefully, gleefully, despite the solicitations on all hands exhibited, declared he must also go, that he had to meet the Lord Chancellor, and could not keep him waiting. There was no more prayer wasted after this announcement, everybody laughed too much. Taking a handful of nuts from a dish, and throwing a glance of inexpressible elfishness at my mother, he said, "Carl and the Lord Chancellor and I are going to

crack them in a corner. Come, Carlomein! we must not keep so grand a person waiting." I know not what blank he left behind him, but I know what a world he carried with him. We had such an afternoon! but we had to be really very busy; I never worked so hard in a small way. When all was finished, the gilt fruit hung, the necklaces festooned, the glitter ordered with that miraculous rapidity in which he surpassed all others, and that fairy craft of his by which he was enabled to re-create all Arabian, mystical—he placed the cradle in the shade.

"You see, Carlomein, I could not have a Christ-child up there at the top, because your brother is rather particular, and might not choose to approve. It will never occur to him about the manger, if we don't tell him; but you perceive all the same that it is here, being made of straw, and very orthodox."

"It appears to me, Sir, that you have learned English customs to some purpose, as well as German."

He replied by dancing round the tree, and twisting in the tapers red and green.

"Now you go, Carlomein, and fetch them all, and when I hear your voices, I will light the candles. Begone, Carlomeinus!" and he snapped his fingers.

They came immediately, all rather mystified, but very curious. I carried Carlotta, who talked the whole way home about the stars. But after clustering a few moments in the dark passage, and her little whispered "ohs!" and wondering sighs, when the door was opened, and the arch musician for all ages seated at the piano played a measure only meet for child or fairy ears, her ecstasy became quite painful. She shuddered and shivered, and at last screamed outright—and then, even then, only Seraphael had power to soothe her—leading her to the fairy earth-lights as he led us to the lights of heaven. . . .

Glorious hours that dye deep our memories in beauty, music that passes into echo and is silent—alike are conserved for ever. Often and often in the months that passed when he had left us, after a visit so exquisite that it might have been diffused millenniums and yet have kept its fragrance, did my thoughts take such a form as this enunciation bears; I was so unutterably grateful for what had happened, that it helped me to bear what was yet before me. The growing, glowing fame, heralded from land to land in praise of that young genius and purest youth, had certainly reached its culmination; neither

envy withered nor scandal darkened the spell of his perfect name. All grades of artists—all ranks of critics—the old and calm—the impertinent but impetuous young—bowed as in heart before him. It was so in every city, I believe; but in ours it was peculiar as well as universal. An odour of heavenly altars had swept our temple—we were fitter to receive him than we had been. In no instance was this shown more clearly than on the fortunate occasion when Davy was treated with, and requested very humbly to add his vocal regiment to the festival chorus. One day, just afterwards, in early April, he came running to me with a letter, anxious for me to open it, as he was in a fit of fright about the parts which ought to have arrived, and had not. It was only a line or two, addressed to me by Seraphael's hand, to tell us that Clara had borne him twin sons.

Davy's astonishment amused me; it appeared that he had formed no idea of their having been likely to come at all until this moment. I was glad, indeed, to be alone, to think of that fairest friend of mine now so singularly blest. I thought of her in bed with her babies—I thought of the babies being his, and she no less his own, until I was not fit company for any one—and it was long before I became so. I could hardly believe it, and more especially because they were all four so far away; for I am not of the opinion of those fortunate transcendentalists who aver we can better realise that which is away from us than that which is at hand. Time and space must remain to us our eternity and our freedom, till freedom and eternity shall be our own.

CHAPTER XLIX

WE were extremely busy for a little while, in preparing a box of presents, and when it was dispatched, we began seriously to anticipate our awful, glorious festival—we began to have leisure to contemplate it. It was a delightful dream amidst that dream to reflect that we should see them all then; for Seraphael sent us word in his grateful reply to our enclosures, that both his children and their mother would accompany him. Meantime I was very anxious to spread the news abroad, and most extraordinary appointments were made by all kinds of people to secure places. I began to think, and had I been in

Germany should, of course, have settled to my own satisfaction, that the performances must be in the open air after all—such crowds demanded admittance so early as early in June. It was for the last week in July that our triple day was fixed, and in the second week of June the long-expected treasure, the exclusive compositions, arrived from Liliensstadt. Davy was one of the committee called immediately, and I awaited in unuttered longing his return to hear our glorious doom.

He came back almost wild. I was quite alarmed, and told him so.

“Charles,” he said, “there is almost reason. So am I myself, in fact; just listen to the contents of the parcel received: an oratorio for the first morning—such a subject—‘Heaven and Earth’—a cantata for a double choir—an organ symphony with interludes for voices only—a sonata for the violin—a group of songs and fancies. The last are for the evenings; but otherwise the evenings are to be filled with Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, and Handel—the programmes already made out. How is it possible, Charles, that such progress can have been condensed into a few mere months? Think of the excitement, the unmitigated stress of such an industry! Three completed works in less than a quarter of a year, not to speak of the lesser wonders!”

It seemed to affect Davy’s brain; as for me, I felt sure the works had stirred, as the Spirit moving upon the face of the waters before the intermomentary light—long ages, as we reckon in this world’s computation, before they framed themselves into form. Nor was this conviction lessened when I first became acquainted with the new-born glories of an imagination on fire of heaven.

Seraphael came to England, and, of course, northwards, to superintend the earliest rehearsals; it was his own wish to do so, and every one felt it necessary to be introduced by him alone to what came alone of him. Those were strange times—I do not seem to have lived them—though in fact I was bodily present in that hall, consecrated by the passion of a child. But they were wild hours; all tempest-tost was my spirit amidst the rush of a manifold enthusiasm.

Seraphael was so anxious to be at his home again that the rehearsals were conducted daily; he was to return again, having departed, for their ultimate fulfilment. It appeared very remarkable that he should not have taken the whole affair at once, have brought his family over then, and there remained;

but upon the subject he was unapproachable, only saying with relation to his arduous life just then and then to be, that he could not be too much occupied to please himself.

He did not stay in our house this time, we could not press him to do so, for he was evidently in that state to which the claims of friendship may become a burden instead of a beguiling joy. He was alone greatly at his hotel, though I can for myself say that in his intercourse with me, his gentleness towards me, were so sweet that I dare not remind myself of them. Still, in all he said and did there was something seeming to be that was not; an indescribable want of interest in the charms of existence which he had ever drawn into his bosom—a constant endeavour to rouse from a manifest abstraction. Notwithstanding he still wore the air of the most perfect health, nor did I construe those signs except into the fact of his being absent from his new-found, his endeared and delighted home. He left us so suddenly that I was only just in time to see him off. He would not permit me to accompany him to London, from whence he should instantly embark; but it was a letter from Clara that really hastened his departure—his babes were ill. I could not gain from him the least idea of their affection nor whether there was cause for fear—his face expressed alarm, but had an unutterable look besides; a look which certainly astonished me, for it might have bespoken indifference, and it might bespeak despair. One smile I caught as he departed that was neither indifferent nor desolate; it wrung my heart with happiness to reflect that smile had been for me.

The feeling I had for those unknown babies was inexplicable after he was fairly gone. That I should have loved them, though unseen, was scarcely strange, for they were the offspring of the two I loved best on earth; but I longed and languished for one glimpse of their baby faces, just in proportion to the haunting certainty which clutched me, that those baby faces I should never see. Their beauty had been Seraphael's only inspiration when, in conversation with me, he had fully seemed himself. The one so light and clear, with eyes as the blue of midnight—his brow, her eyes; the other soft and roseate, with her angel forehead and his own star-like gaze—her smile upon them both, and the features both of him. As one who reads of the slaughtered darlings in the days of Herod—as one who pores on chronicles of the cradle plague-smitten—I felt for them; they seemed never to have been born, to me.

Oh! that they had never been born indeed! at least there

was one while I thought so. We had a heart-rending letter from Clara, one fortnight after her lord returned to her; the twins were both dead, and by that time both buried in the same grave! With her pure self-forgetfulness where another suffered, she spoke no word of her own sorrow, but she could not conceal from us how fearfully the blow had fallen upon him. The little she said made us all draw close together and tremble with an emotion we could not confess. But the letter concluded with an assurance of his supreme and undaunted intention, undisturbed by the shocks and agonies of unexpected woe, to undertake the conductorship of the festival. The sorrow that now shadowed expectations which had been too bright, tempered also our joy, too keen till then. But after a week or two, when we received no further tidings, we began absolutely to expect him; and with a stronger anticipation, infatuation, than ever, built upon a future, which no man may dare to call his own, either for good or evil. The hottest summer I had ever known interfered not with the industry alike of band and chorus. The intense beauty of the music and its marvellous embodiments had fascinated the very country far and wide; it was as if art stood still, and waited even for him who had magnified her above the trumpery standards of her predated progress.

We were daily expecting a significant assurance that he was on our very shores. I was myself beginning to tremble in the air of sorrow that must necessarily surround them both, himself and his companion, when, one morning—I forget the date; may I never remember it!—I was reflecting upon the contents of a paper which Davy took in every week, a chronicle of musical events, which I ransacked conscientiously, though it was seldom much to the purpose. Strangely enough I had been reading of the success of another friend of mine—even Laura, who had not denied herself the privilege of artist-masonry after all, for she was dancing amidst flowers and fairy elements, and I was determining I would, at the first opportunity, go to see her. Then I considered I should like her to come to the festival; and was making up a letter of requests to my ever generous friend, Miss Lawrence, that she might bring Laura, as I knew she would be willing, when a letter came for me—was brought by an unconscious servant, and laid between my hands. It was in Clara's writing, once again. I was coward enough to spare myself a few moments. There was no one in the room; I was just on the wing to my band,

but I could not help still sparing myself a little, and a very little longer. I believe I knew as well what was in the letter as if I had opened it, before I broke the seal. I believe terror and intense presentiment lent me that stillness and steadiness of perception which are the very empyrean of sorrow. Enough! I opened it at last, and found it exactly as I had expected; Seraphael himself was ill. The hurry and trouble of the letter induced me to believe there was more behind her words than in them, mournful and unsatisfactory as they were. He was, as he believed himself to be, overwrought; and though he considered himself in no peril, he must have quiet. This struck me most; it was all over if he felt he must have quiet. But the stunning point was, that he deputed his friend, Lenhart Davy, to the conductorship of his own works, the concerts all being arranged by himself in preparation, and nothing but a director being required. Clara concluded by asking me to come to her if I could. She did not say he wished to see me, but I knew she wished to see me herself, and even for his sake, that call was enough for me.

My duties, my intentions, all lay in the dust. I considered but how to make way thither, with the speed that one fain would change to wind, to lightning, or yoke to them as steeds. I packed up nothing, nor did I leave a single trace of myself behind, except Clara's letter, and a postscript, in pencil, of my own. I was in my mother's house when the letter came upon me; and flying past Davy's on my way to the railroad, I saw Millicent with Carlotta looking out of one of the windows, all framed in roses. It was a sight I merely recall as we recall touches of pathos to medicine us for deeper sorrow. Two days and nights I travelled incessantly, without information or help, solitary as a pilgrim who is wandering from home to heaven; it could be nothing else I knew. The burning, glowing summer—the tossing forests—the cornfields yet unravished—the glory on the crested lime-trees—the vines smothering rock, and wall, and terrace with fruit of life—all these I saw and many other dreams, as a dream myself, I passed. I only know I seemed taking the whole world. So wide the scattered sensations spread themselves that I dared not call home to myself; for they did but minister to the perfect appreciation that what I dreamed was true, and what I yearned to clasp as truth, a dream.

The city of his home was before me—but how can I call it a city? It was a nest itself in a nest of hills. Below the river

rushed, its music ever in a sleep, and its blue waves softened hyaline by distance. In the last sunset smile I saw the river and the valley—the vines at hand crawled over it, and there was not a house around that was not veiled in flowers. When I entered the valley from below, the purple evening had drowned the sunset as with a sea—there was no mist nor cloud, the starlight was all pure, it brightened moment by moment. And having hurried all along till now, at length I rested. For now I felt, that of all I had ever endured, the approaching crisis was the consummation. Had I dared, I would have returned; for I even desired not to advance. My own utter impotence, my unavailing presence, weighed me down, and the might of my passion insphered me as did that distant starlight—I was as nothing to itself. I had shed no tears. Tears I have ever found the springs of gladness, and grief most dry. But who could weep in that breathless expectation? who would not, when he cannot, rejoice to weep? Brighter than I had ever seen them, the stars shone on me; and brighter and brighter they seemed to burn through the crystal clarity of my perception; my ear felt open—I heard sounds born of silence, which indeed were no sounds, but *themselves* silence. I saw the unknown, which, indeed, could not be seen; and thus I waited, suspended in the midst of time, yearning for some heaven to open, and take me in. Whatever air stirred was soft as the pulse of sleep; whatever sigh it carried was a sigh of flowers, late summer sweetness, first autumn sadness, poured into faint embrace. I saw the church-tower in the valley; it reached me as a dream. All was a dream around about—the dark shade of the terraced houses, their shadier trees; and I myself the dreamer, to whom those stars above, those heights so unimaginable, were the only waking day. At midnight I had not moved; and at midnight I dreamed another dream, still standing there.

The midnight hour had struck, and died along the valley into the quiet, when a sudden gathering gleam behind a distant rock rose like a red moon-light, and tinged the very sky. But there was no moon, and I felt afraid and child-like. I was obliged to watch to ascertain. It grew into a glare, that gleam—the glare of fire—and slowly, stilly as even in a dream indeed, wound about the rock and passed down along the valley a dark procession, bearing torches, with a darker in the midst of them than they.

Down the valley to the church they came—I knew they were

for resting there. No bell caught up the silence, I heard no tramp of feet, they might have been spirits for all the sound they made—and when at last they paused beneath me in the night, the torches streamed all steadily, and rained their flaming smiles upon the imagery in the midst.

That bier was carried proudly as of a warrior called from deadly strife to death's own sleep. But not as warrior's its ornaments—its crown. The velvet folds passed beneath into the dark grass as they paused, as storm-clouds rolling softly, as gloom itself at rest. But above, from the face of the bier the darkness fled away—it was covered with a mask of flowers. Wreath within wreath lay there—hue within hue, from virgin white and hopeful azure to the youngest blush of love. And in the very midst, next the pale roses and their tender green, a garland of the deepest crimson glowed, leafless, brilliant, vivid—the full petals, the orb-like glory, gave out such splendours to the flame-light, that the fresh first youth's blood of a dauntless heart was alone the suggestion of its symbol. Keenly in the distance the clear vision, the blaze of softness, reached me—I stirred not, I rushed not forwards—I joined in the dread feast afar. I stood as between the living and the dead; the dead below—the living with the stars above; and the plague of my heart was stayed.

I waited until the bier, bare of its gentle burden, stood lonely by the grave. I waited until the wreaths, flung in, covered the treasure with their kisses, that was a jewel for earth to hide. I saw the torches thrown into the abyss, quenched by the kisses of the flowers; even as the earthly joy, the beauty had been quenched in that abyss of light which to us is only darkness. I watched the black shadows draw closer round the grave—one suffocating cry arose, as if all hearts were broken in that spasm, or as if Music herself had given up the ghost. *But Music never dies.* In reply to that sickening shout, as if, indeed, a heaven opened to receive me, a burst, a peal—a shock of transcendent music—fell from some distant height. I saw no sign the while I heard; nor was it a mourning strain. Triumphant, jubilant, sublime in seraph sweetness, joy immortal, it mingled into the arms of night. While yet its echoes rang, another strain made way—came forth to meet it—and melted into its embrace; as jubilant, as blissful—but farther, fainter, more ineffable. Again it yielded to the echoes; but above those echoes swelled another, a softer—and yet another and a softer voice, that was but the mingling of many voices, now far and far away.

Distantly, dyingly, till death drank distance up, the music wandered. And at length, when the mystic spell was broken and I could hear no more, I could only believe it still went on and on, sounding through all the earth, beyond my ear; and rising up to heaven, from shores of lands untraversed as that country beyond the grave! All peace came there upon me—as a waveless deep it welled up and upwards from my spirit, till I dared no longer sorrow; my love was dispossessed of fear, and the demon Despair, exorcised, fled as one who wept, and fain would hide his weeping. And yet that hope, if hope it could be that cooled my heart and cheered my spirit, was not a hope of earth. My faith had fled as an angel into the light, and that hope alone stayed by me.

It was not until the next morning and then not early, that I visited that house, and the spirit now within it whose living voice had called me thither. No longer timidly, if most tenderly, I advanced along the valley, past the church which guarded now the spot on all this earth the most like heaven; and found the mansion now untenanted that heaven itself had robbed. Quiet, stillness—not as of death, but most like new-born wonder—possessed that house. The overhanging balconies, the sunburst on the garden, the fresh carnations, the carved gateway, the shaded window, and over all the cloudless sky, and around all that breathed and lived: it was a lay beyond all poetry, and such a melancholy may never music utter! Thoné took me in, and I believe she had waited for me at the door; she spoke not, and I spoke not; she led me only forwards with the air of one who feels all words are lost between those who understand but cannot benefit each other. She led me to a room in which she left me; but I was not to be alone. I saw Clara instantly—she came to meet me from the window, unchanged as the summer-land without by the tension or the touch of trouble. I could not possibly believe, as I saw her, and seeing her, felt my courage flow back, my life resume its current; that she had ever really suffered. Her face so calm, was not pale; her eye so clear, was tearless. Nor was there that writhing smile about her lovely lips that is more agonising than any tears. It was entirely in vain I tried to speak—had she required comfort my words would have thronged at my will; but if any there required comfort, it could not be herself. Seeing my fearful agitation, which would work through all my silence, her sweet voice startled me; I listened as to an angel, or as to an angel I should never have listened.

“If I had known how it would be, I would never have been so rash as to send for you. But he was so strange—for he did not suffer—that I could not think he was going to die. I do not call it dying, nor would you if you had seen it. I wish I could make that darling feel such death was better than to live.”

I put a constraint upon myself which no other presence could have brought me to exhibit.

“What darling, then?” said I, for I could only think of one, who was darling as well as king.

“Poor Starwood—but you will be able to comfort him—you are the only person who could.”

“Perhaps it would not be kind to comfort him—perhaps he would rather suffer. But I will do my best to please you. Where is he now?”

“I will bring him;” and she left the room.

In another moment all through the sunny light, that despite the shaded windows streamed through the very shade, she entered again with Starwood. He flew at me and sank upon the ground. I have seen women—many—weep, and some few men, but I have never seen, and may I never see! such weeping as he wept. Tears—as if tropic rains should drench our northern gardens—seemed dissolving with his very life his gentle temperament. I could not rouse nor raise him. His sodden hair; his hands, as damp as death; his dreadful sobs; his moans of misery; his very crushed and helpless attitude, appealed to me not in vain; for I felt at once it was the only thing to do for him that he should be suffered to weep till he was satisfied, or till he could weep no more. And yet his tears provoked not mine, but rather drove them inwards, and froze them to my heart. Nor did Clara weep; but I could not absolutely say whether she had already wept or not—for, where other eyes grow dim, hers grew only brighter; and weeping—had she wept—had only cleared her heaven. We sat for hours in that room together—that fair but dreadful room! its brilliant furniture unworn, its frescoes delicate as any dream; its busts, its pictures crowding calm lights and glorious colours, all fresh as the face of Nature, with home upon its every look; save only where the organ towered, and muffling in dark velvet its keys and pipes, reminded us that music had left home for heaven, and we might no more find it there!

And again it was longed-for evening, the twilight tarried not. It crept—it came—it fell upon the death-struck woeful valley. Oh, blessed hour!—the repose alike of passion and of grief! Oh, blessed heaven! to have softened the mystic change from day to darkness so that we can bear them both!—never so blessed as when the broken-hearted seek thy twilights and find refreshment in thy shades! At that hour, we two alone stood together by the glorious grave. For the first time, as the sun descended, Starwood had left off weeping; I had myself put him in his bed, and rested beside him till he was asleep; then I had returned to Clara. She was wrapped in black, waiting for me; we went together, without speaking, without signifying our intentions to each other, but we both took the same way, and stood, where I have said, together; and when we had kissed the ground she spoke. She had not spoken all the day—most grave and serious had been her air—she yet looked more as a child that had lost its father than a widowed wife—as if she had never been married, she struck me; an almost virgin air possessed her, an unserene reserve, for now her accents faltered.

“I could not say to you till we were alone,” she said, “and we could not be alone to-day, how much I thank you for coming; so many persons are to be here in a day or two, and I wish to consult with you.”

“I will see them all for you—I will arrange everything; but you are not going away?”

“Going away? and you to say so, too! I will never leave this place until I die!”

“You loved him, then, thank God!”

“Loved him! shall I tell you how? You know best what it was to love him, for you loved him best!—better than I did, and yet I loved him with all love. Do I look older, and more like this world, or less?”

She smiled a sweet significance—a smile she had learned from him.

“I have been thinking how young you look—too young almost. You are so fresh, so child-like, and, may I say it? so fair.”

“You may say anything. I think I have grown fairer myself. Very strange to confess, is it? But you are my friend, to you I should confess anything. I have been with a spirit-angel—no wonder I am fresh. I have been in heaven—

no wonder I am fair. I felt myself grow better, hour by hour. After I left you with him—when his arms were round me; when he kissed me; when his tenderness oppressed me—I felt raised to God. No heart ever was so pure, so overflowing with the light of heaven. I can only believe I have been in heaven, and have fallen here; not that he has left me, and I must follow him to find him. I will not follow yet, my friend! I have much to do that he has left me.”

“Thank God! you will not leave us! but more, because you love him, and made him happy.”

“You do not, perhaps, know that he was never anything but happy. When I think of discontent and envy, and hatred and anger, and care, and see them painted upon other faces, I feel that he must have tasted heaven to have made himself so happy here. I can fancy a single taste of heaven, Sir, lasting a whole life long.”

She was his taste of heaven, as a foretaste even to me! But had she, indeed, never learned the secret of his memory? or had she turned, indeed, its darkness into light?

“I wish to hear about the last.”

“You know nearly as much as I do, or as I can tell you. You remember the music you heard last night? It was the last he wrote, and I found it, and saved it, and had done with it what you heard.”

But I cannot descant on death-beds; it is the only theme which I dare believe, if I were to touch, would scare me at my dying hour. I will not tamper with those scenes, but console myself by reminding, that if the time had been, and that, too, lately, when upon that brain fell the light in fever and the sun in fire, the time was over; and sightless—painless—deaf to the farewells of dying music—he, indeed, could not be said to *suffer* death.

Nor did he *know*, to suffer it, as he had said. The crown, that piercing with its *fiery thorns* unfelt, had pressed into his brow the death-sting, should also crown with its *star-flowers* the waking unto life. . . .

“You remember what you said, Mr. Auchester, that he needed a ‘companion for his earthly hours.’ I tried to be his companion—he allowed me to be so; and one of the last times he spoke, he said, ‘Thank Carl for giving you to me.’”

That echo reaches me from the summer-night of sadness and

still communion; of *passion's slumber by the dead*. It is now some years ago, but never was any love so fresh to the spirit it enchanted, as is the enchantment of this sorrow, still mine own. So be it ever mine, till all shall be for ever!

I am in England, and again at home. Great changes have swept the earth; I know of none within myself. Through all convulsions the music whispers to me *that music is*. I ought to believe in its existence, for it is my own life, and the life of the living round me. Davy is still at work, but not alone in hope; sometimes in the midst of triumph. They tell me I shall never grow rich, but with my violin I shall never be poor. I have more than enough for everything, as far as I myself am concerned; and as for those I love, there is not one who prospers not, even by means of music.

Starwood has been three years in London. His name, enfolded in another name, brought the whole force of music to his feet. It is not easy to procure lessons of the young professor, who can only afford twenty minutes to the most exacting pupil. It is still less easy to hear him play in public; for he has a will of his own, and will only play what he likes, and only what he likes to the people he likes; for he is a bit of a cynic, and does not believe half so much as I do that music is making way. He married his first feminine pupil—a girl of almost fabulous beauty. I believe he gave her half-a-dozen lessons before the crisis—not any afterwards; and I know that he was seventeen and she fifteen years of age at the time they were betrothed. His whole nature is spent upon her, but she is kind enough to like me, and thus I sometimes receive an invitation, which I should accept did they reside in the moon.

But I have other London friends. After two seasons, more satisfactory than brilliant, Laura retired from the stage. During the time she danced her name was scarcely whispered, I believe she was even feared in her spiritual exaltation of her art; but no sooner had she left the lights than all critics and contemporaries discovered her excellences. She was wooed with the white-flower garlands of the purest honour, with the gold so few despised, to return and resume her career, now certain fame; but she was never won, and I have since made clear to myself, that she only danced in public until she had raised a certain capital, for you will only find her now in her

graceful drawing-room where London is most secluded, surrounded by the most graceful and loveliest of the children of the peerage. No one but Mlle. Lauretta—her stage and professional name—prepares the little rarities for transplantation into the court-garden, or rehearses the quadrille for the Prince of Wales' birthnight-ball. I believe Miss Lemark, as she is known still to me, or even Laura, might have had many homes if she had chosen—homes where she could not but have felt at home. Clara was even importunate that she should live with her in Germany. Miss Lawrence was excessively indignant at being refused herself; and there have been worthy gentlemen, shades not to be invoked or recognised, who would have been very thankful to be allowed to dream of that pale brow veiled, those clear eyes downcast, those tapering fingers twined in theirs; but Laura, like myself, will *never* marry.

For Miss Lawrence, too, that glorious friend of mine, I must have a little corner. It was Miss Lawrence who carried to Laura the news of Seraphael's death—herself heart-broken, who bound up that bleeding heart. It is Miss Lawrence, whose secretive and peculiar generosity so permeates the heart of music in London, that no true musician is actually ever poor. It is Miss Lawrence, who, disdaining subscription-lists, steps unseen through every embarrassment where those languish who are too proud or too humble to complain, and leaves that behind her which re-assures and re-establishes, by the magic of charity, strewn from her artist-hand. It is Miss Lawrence who discerns the temporality of art to be that which is as inevitable as its spiritual necessity; who yet ministers to its uttermost spiritual appreciation by her patronage of the highest only. It is Miss Lawrence you see wherever music is to be heard, with her noble brow and sublimely beneficent eyes, her careless costume, and music-beaming lips; but you cannot know, as I do, what it is to have her for a friend.

Miss Lawrence certainly lost caste by receiving and entertaining, as she did, Mlle. Lauretta, for both when Laura was dancing before the public and had done with so dancing, Miss Lawrence would insist upon her appearing at every party or assembly she gave, whether with her father's sanction or without, nobody knew. To be introduced to a ballet-girl, or even a dancing-lady, at the same table or upon the same carpet with barristers and baronets, with golden-hearted bankers, and "earnest" men of letters!—she certainly lost caste by her

resolute unconventionalism, did my friend Miss Lawrence! But then, as she said to me, "What in life does it matter about losing caste with people who have no caste to lose?" She writes to me continually, and her house is my home in London. I have never been able to make her confess that she sent me my violin; but I know she did, for her interest in me can only be explained on that ground, and there is that look upon her face, whenever I play, which assures me of something associated in her mind and memory with my playing that is not itself music.

Miss Lawrence also corresponds with Clara; and Clara sees us too; but no one, seeing her, would believe her to be childless and alone; she is more beautiful than ever, and not less calm—more loving and more beloved.

We had Florimond Anastase, a concert-player, at our very last festival. He was exactly like the young Anastase who taught me, and I should not have been able to believe him older but for his companion, a young lady, who sat below him in the audience, and at whom I could only gaze. It was Josephine Cerinthia, no longer a child, but still a prodigy, for she has the finest voice, it is said, in Europe. No one will hear it however, for Anastase, who adopted her eight years ago, makes her life the life of a princess, or as very few princesses can be; he works for her, he saves for her, and has already made her rich. They say he will marry her by-and-by; it may be so, but I do not myself believe it.

Near the house in which Seraphael died, and rising as from the ashes of his tomb, is another house which holds his name, and will ever hold it to be immortal. Sons and daughters of his own are there—of his land, his race, his genius—those whom music has "called" and "chosen" from the children of humanity. The grandeur of the institution—its stupendous scale, its intention, its consummation—afford, to the imagination that enshrines him, the only monument that would not insult his name. Nor is that temple without its priestess—that altar without its angel. She who devoted the wealth of his wisdom to that work gave up the treasure of her life besides, and has consecrated herself to its superintendence. At the monumental school she would be adored, but that she is too much loved as children love—too much at home there to be feared. I hold her as my passion for ever; she makes my old years young in memory, and to every new morning of my life

her name is Music. With another name—not dearer, but as dear—she is indissolubly connected; and if I preserve my heart's first purity, it is to them I owe it.

I write no more. Had I desired to treat of music specifically, I should not have written at all; for that theme demands a tongue beyond the tongues of men and angels—a voice that is no more heard. But if one faithful spirit find an echo in my expression, to his beating heart for music, his inward song of praise, it is not in vain that I write, that what I have written is written.

CHARLES AUCHESTER.



EVERYMAN
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THEE,
I BE THY GUIDE
IN THY MOJOURNEY
TO GO BY THY WOL

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